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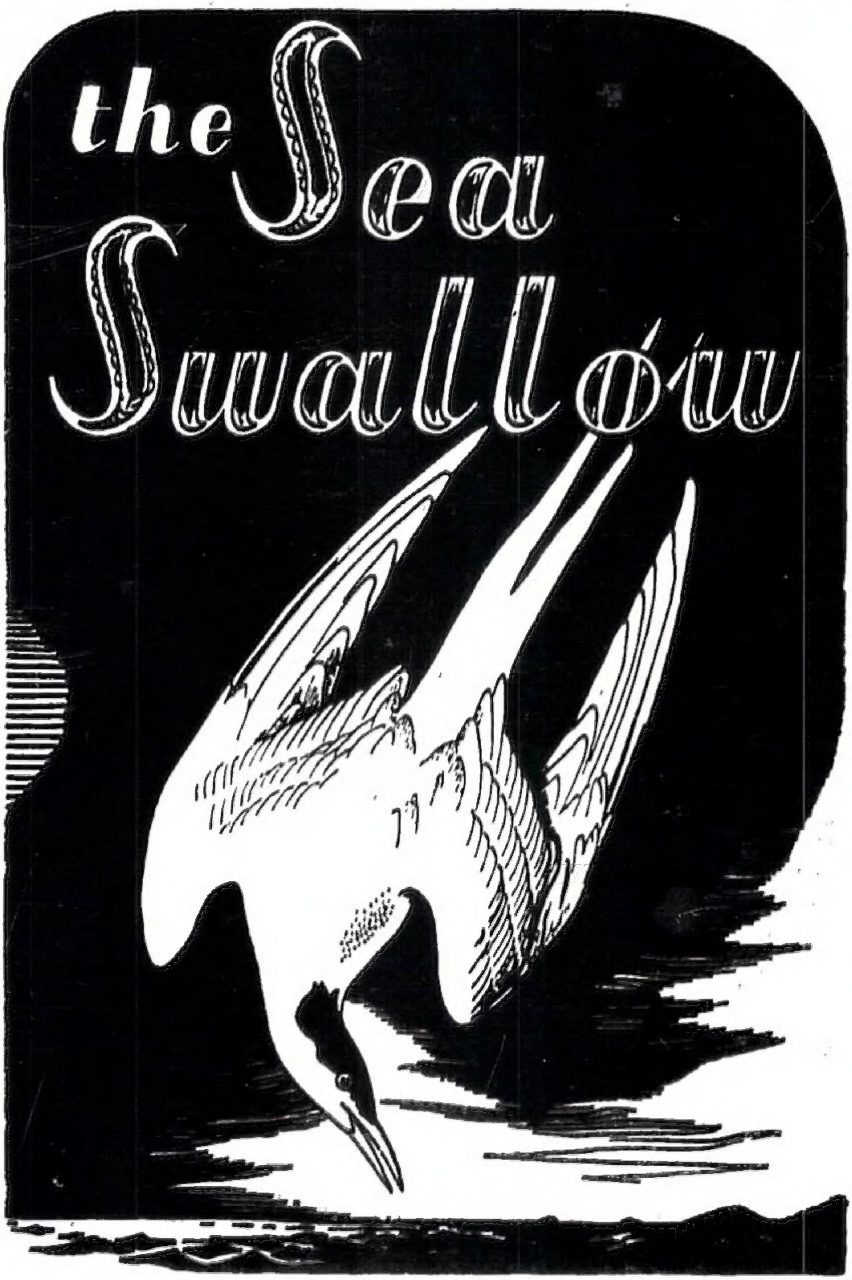
the Sea Swallow



BEING THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ROYAL NAVAL BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

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ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY

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Subscription rates. Full and Associate Members £8 (£7 if covenanted) annually. Library rates - Cost of *Sea Swallow* (£6) plus postage.
Membership has been widened for the R.N. to include all those who share a common background - the sea itself - regardless of nationality.*
Aims and activities. The primary aim of the Society is to promote a forum for the exchange of information on seabirds, and of landbirds at sea, by members for whom birdwatching is a spare-time recreation and hobby. The secondary aim is to co-ordinate the efforts of individual members using standardised recording methods so that observations can be of value to the professional ornithologist ashore.
RNBWS Record Forms. Standardised forms for recording Seabirds and Landbirds at sea. Seabird Census sheets, Bird examined in the Hand (BEH) forms have been designed for use at sea. Stocks are kept by Warrant Officer C. A. R. Bailey, 8 Grange Close, Gosport Hants. PO12 3DX. (Tel: 0705 526264). Please give detailed requirements and enclose a large stamped and addressed envelope.
Completed record forms (both seabirds and landbirds) should be sent to Michael Casement.
Material for publication in *Sea Swallow* should be sent to the Editor (see instructions to authors inside back cover).

*an application form for membership is at page 87 in this edition of *Sea Swallow*.

Upper. Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis,*
Lower. Black Petrel *Ptocellaria parkinsoni.*
In position 30.1°S 171.5°E, N. Tasman Sea. 24 Mar'94.
Photos: Captain Neil Cheshire MN.

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

The RNBWS President ought by rights I am sure to take his holidays afloat, instead of sitting as I am by a French lake, seeking inspiration but hopelessly distracted by Kingfishers, Spotted Flycatchers and Black Kites. But something else caught my eye too, and that was not a bird but an article in the *Herald Tribune*, about the damage loggers are doing to the rain forests of Papua New Guinea. It caught my eye because I'd read this sad story before, predicted in one of Captain Simpson's fascinating accounts of life on the Fly River. And that brings me to my point: this may not be a seabird matter, not strictly our business you might say, but it is I suggest highly relevant to our role as contributors to the cause of conservation.

You will find more about Papua New Guinea later, in what this year is a bumper edition of *Sea Swallow*, thanks to a pleasing abundance of contributions and of course sterling work by our Editor. But we still need more reports from sea - and of course more members!

DAVID DOBSON

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

"Yesterday Morning a Tropick bird and a man of Warr flew about the Ship but this day all the fouls are gon we are now in the Latt of Fernando Loronho but see it not."

Log of Edmond Halley, Commander, 21 Nov 1699

The seaman has always had an interest in the natural world about him, as is evident in many vernacular names of birds and other creatures. The practice of systematically recording sightings, along with the other data in the log of a voyage, is of some antiquity. Such discipline came naturally to a commander such as Edmond Halley, the eminent scientist, during his voyages in HMS *Paramore* (1698-1701). However, it is also evident in the record of circumnavigation made by a former buccaneer William Dampier in HMS *Roebuck* (1699-1701). The crucial requirements are not scientific learning and academic qualification, but a keen eye and a faithful pen.

There is an unbroken tradition here. Today the Hydrographer of the Navy in his publication *The Mariner's Handbook*, and in his *General Instructions for Hydrographic Surveyors*, still commends the recording of observations of natural phenomena for subsequent analysis by men of science. In both publications RNBWS is quoted as a source of advice on systematic observation and data-handling. This same guidance is now included in *Fleet Operating Orders*.

We face a continuing challenge here. One aspect is again unerringly achieved in the quality of contribution to this edition of *Sea Swallow*, indicating both the exciting opportunities which still exist, and just what the amateur sea-going observer can achieve. The more fundamental task falls to us all - to catch the enthusiasm of the seafarers of today and of the future, and to recruit and inspire the Halleys and Dampiers who will maintain the record of the seabirds of the oceans and remote areas.

MICHAEL BARRITT

EDITORIAL

It has been especially difficult this year to find space for too many interesting contributions received. Some arrived well past my deadlines, but were given priority because of their international importance. In attempting to keep within budget, agonising decisions have had to be taken either savagely to prune, defer till next year, or to drop altogether - my apologies to some authors who will be disappointed. Another complication is that we have had to change our printers, to catch up with changing technologies, and for other reasons. Readers will probably note few changes in appearance this year, but this move does open up new possibilities for the future. The result is an even thicker volume than last year, but we have had to dip into our financial reserves to pay for it.

A recurring theme is the conservation of threatened species, and there are two items of good news to report - the action by the Island Council, Tristan da Cunha, to establish Inaccessible Island, as a Nature Reserve (see page 69), and the launch by Falklands Conservation of the "Penguin Appeal" to ensure that a major programme of conservation research, action and education can be developed to counter the increasing threats to penguins and other wildlife in the South West Atlantic. Further details of this are published in RNBWS Newsletter,*Bulletin* No. 131.

In my efforts to maintain this report in its current format and cost, I make a special plea to authors for next year - please make your articles brief (ideally 1,500-2,000 words maximum) and send in early. But above all, do please keep up the regular observations, using the standard seabird and landbird report forms. We need more of these, also good photographs. Finally, if anyone has any ideas for achieving savings for this journal, by increasing the print-run, please let me know. Why not buy extra copies of Sea Swallow, as presents for your friends, and persuade them to join as members? The sad alternative is to increase the price (and annual subscriptions).

Good luck, and good birdwatching!

MICHAEL CASEMENT

S T O P P R E S S -
Another Yellow-nosed Albatross - off Norway

Subsequent to the report last year in *Sea Swallow* (42: 63-65) of the Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos* off Cornwall by Bill Curtis on 29 April 1985, this record was withdrawn by the observer from further consideration by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC), in his frustration at the eight years of delay and indecision, NOT because he has any doubts about the correctness of this identification; he was himself formerly a member of their seabird panel.

An adult of this species has now been photographed, off Halten, Sør-Trøndelag, Norway on 13 April 1994 - see the July issue of *Birding World* 7: 241-245. The implications are that this species may well have been overlooked in the North Atlantic for many years - keep a sharp look-out for others, take meticulous notes, and also photographs (if possible).

M.B.C.

NOTES ON SEABIRD REPORTS RECEIVED IN 1993

By Captain N.G.Cheshire, MN.

This year has seen a welcome increase in the number of observers contributing reports. Observations were concentrated in the N. Atlantic, with 59% of contributions from this area, and 25% S. Atlantic/S. Indian Ocean, 6% Mediterranean, 5% N. Pacific and 2% Indian Ocean. Thanks to all observers for their interesting and detailed reports. A major contribution received from Capt. A.R. Louch included 73 days of observations in the SW Indian and adjacent Southern Ocean from 6 Feb to 2 May'93, within the limits of 34°S 18°E, 63.5°S 30.5°E, 64.6°S 85°E and 46°S 50.5°E. It deserves a more thorough analysis than is possible here.

The summary of observations would be easier if all observers gave positions in latitude and longitude, rather than long distances off little-known islands and headlands. Most ships are now equipped with GPS, giving a continuous display of lat and long, so for those with access to the bridge this should be straightforward.

OBSERVERS SENDING NOTES DURING 1993

Mr R.M. Curber MV *St Helena* Cardiff-Tenerife-Ascension-St.Helena-Capetown Nov-Dec (6C, 3R).

LSA M. Cutts HMS *Scylla* Falklands-Valparaiso-Guayaquil-Panama. Oct-Nov'93. (4R)

Radio Officer M.G.Finn MV*Altamira* Galveston-UK Nov-Dec'92 (1C); MV *Alsyta Smits* Florida-Gibraltar-Black Sea-Norfolk Va-Texas May-Aug'93. (3C)

Mr S. Hales & Mr D. Hallett MV *Bretagne* Plymouth-Santander and return Apr'93; MV *Barfleur* Poole-Cherbourg and return May'93; MV *Val de Loire* Plymouth-Santander and return Sep'93. (23N)

Capt. P.W. Jackson MV *Wild Lily* North Sea Aug-Sep'92 (1R); MV *Aya* Tees-Barcelona and return Oct'92 (1R); MV *Seki Cedar* Le Havre-Benin-Lagos-Uk May-Jun'93. (3C, P)

CPO G.A. Johnson MV *Wild Lily* Tees-Amsterdam Feb'93 (1R); MV *Seki Cedar* Le Havre-Lagos-Portugal UK May-Jun'93.(4R); MV *City of Barcelona* Baltic Aug'93 (1R); Tees-Livorno-Setubal-Tees Nov-Dec'93. (3R)

Ms S. King SV *Soren Larsen* UK and Irish waters Apr-Jul'93. (3R)

Capt M.C.Littlewood MV *London Spirit*. San Francisco-Guaymas-Manzanillo Oct-Nov'92; Salina Cruz-Los Angeles Feb'93 (4N)

Capt. A.R.Louch RRS *Discovery* Capetown-Southern Ocean and return Feb-Mar'93; Capetown-Southern Ocean and return Mar-Apr'93 (20C, 2B); Las Palmas-Dakar and return Sep-Nov'93 (5C); Las Palmas-Cadiz Nov-Dec'93. (3C)

A.H.Todd RFA *Bayleaf* Hebridean waters Jun'93 (6R); Med-Adriatic Aug'93 (3R); N. Atlantic Sep'93. (1R) Falklands-Barbados May'92 Caribbean-UK Jun-Jul'92. (3C, 4R)

Capt.M.G.Weir MV *OOCL Charisma* Suez-Rotterdam Jun'93; Suez-Singapore Jul'93; Kaohsiung-Kobe-Pusan Jul'93. (4N)

Key. R-RNBWS Report Sheets, C-RNBWS Census Sheets, N-other notes, P-photographs, B-RNBWS Bird-in-hand Forms.

NOTES ON SPECIES

(**Dates:** All dates given are for 1993, unless otherwise shown).

ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. Observed by ARL in small numbers between Feb and Apr in the SW Indian Ocean and adjacent Southern

Ocean. His observations included a maximum hourly count of seven at 46.5°S 50.3°E near the Crozets on 11 Mar, and a southerly record of two at 64.4°S 60.2°E on 20 Feb (sea temp 1.2°C).
Waved Albatross ***Diomedea irrorata***. Fifteen were reported by MC at 04.4°S 81.2°W off northern Peru on 31 Oct.
Black-footed Albatross ***Diomedea nigripes***. MCL saw one at 35.6°N 122°W off southern California on 29 Oct'92 and another adult at 27.3°N 115.5°W off Baja California, near the southern limit of its range, on 31 Oct'92.
Black-browed Albatross ***Diomedea melanophris***. Small numbers were seen by ARL in the SW Indian Ocean and adjacent Southern Ocean with a maximum hourly count of four at 40.7°S 32.6°E on 12 Mar and the most southerly record at 50.7°S 66.7°E on 3 Mar (sea temp 5.1°C).
Shy Albatross ***Diomedea cauta***. ARL had hourly counts of 16 at 43.4°S 36.1°E on 3 Apr, and 17 the next day at 44.4°S 38.1°E.
Chatham Albatross ***Diomedea (cauta) eremita***. Breeding of this species is confined to Pyramid Rock, Chatham Islands. It is rarely reported from nearby NZ coastal waters and is thought to disperse into the central S. Pacific. There is now a sight record from waters off northern Peru. (Haase 1994)
Yellow-nosed Albatross ***Diomedea chlororhynchos***. ARL had hourly counts of eight at 42°S 38.1°E on 13 Mar, 15 (13 ad + 2 imm) at 41.9°S 32.8°E on 1 Apr, and southerly records of one at 52.6°S 41.5°E, and another at 52.5°S 40.1°E on 15 and 17 Apr (sea temp 3.4°,3.6°C).
Grey-headed Albatross ***Diomedea chrysostoma***. Occasional records by ARL from the Southern Ocean with hourly counts of four at 46.5°S 50.3°E on 11 Mar, and two at 41.4°S 28.4°E on 30 Apr.
Sooty Albatross ***Phoebetria fusca***. Single birds and pairs were observed by ARL from Feb-Apr, with a maximum count of three at 47.9°S 35°E on 22 Apr. Latitudinal range of his sightings was 41.5°S to 56.3°S (sea temp 19.1°-2.0°C).
Light-mantled Albatross ***Phoebetria palpebrata***. A few records from ARL including hourly counts of four at 63.6°S 69'5°E (sea temp 1.6°C) on 21 Feb, and eight at 46.8°S 34.6°E (sea temp 9°C) on 26 Apr.

A review of all albatrosses has been published by Gales (1993) giving details of breeding, diet and foraging, marine distribution, population status, threats to populations and recommended conservation measures.

PROCELLARIIDAE
FULMARS AND PRIONS *FULMARINAE*

Southern Giant Petrel ***Macronectes giganteus***. Seen by ARL, mainly in the area of the Atlantic Convergence, with hourly counts of ten at 52.5°S 40.1°E on 17 Apr, 20 at 46.9°S 37.2°E on 21st, and 22 at 47.9°S 35°E on 22 Apr.
Northern Giant Petrel ***Macronectes halli***. Reported by ARL from the SW Indian Ocean, with a maximum hourly count of ten at 46.9°S 37.2°E on 21 Apr.
Northern Fulmar ***Fulmarus glacialis***. Many reports from the eastern N. Atlantic and UK waters. Larger counts included 329 seen by SH+DH at 49.3°N 04.6°W in the Channel on 4 Apr, "several hundred" seen by AHT at 59°N 03.4°E, W of Orkney, on 17 Sep, and 200 in flocks of up to 25 counted in 2 hrs at 54.4°N 01.8°E on the Dogger Bank by PWJ on 30 Oct'92

Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialoides*. Only one record from ARL during his 73 days of observations, of a single bird at 64.4°S 34.7°E on 17 Feb.
Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*. Single birds were recorded by ARL at 64.6°S 85°E on 25 Feb and at 63.7°S 84.1°E the next day.
Cape Petrel *Daption capense*. ARL had very few records, with two at 64.6°S 85°E on 25 Feb and three at 47.9°S 35°E on 22 Apr. MC recorded the species north to 27.9°S 73.3°W, off northern Chile on 26 Oct.
Kerguelen Petrel *Lugensa brevirostris*. Observed by ARL between 47°S and 64.5°S, 17.5°E to 80.8°E, with the largest hourly counts of 16 at 63.4°S 30.5°E on 16 Feb, six at 52.3°S 70.5°E on 2 Mar, and 11 at 47.9°S 35°E on 22 Apr.
Prions *Pachyptila sp*. Larger concentrations of Prions seen by ARL were identified as Broad-billed *P.vittata* - 60 at 59°S 24.1°E on 14 Feb, 150 at 63.4°S 30.5°E on 16 Feb, 250 at 46.7°S 32.6°E on 14 Mar, and 500 at 52.5°S 40.1°E on 17 Apr; Narrow-billed *P.belcheri* - 200 at 54.5°S 40°E on 16 Apr.
Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*. ARL saw most south of the Antarctic Convergence. Larger hourly counts included 13 at 61.6°S 27.5°E on 15 Feb, 75 at 63.4°S 30.5°E in a mixed flock with Broad-billed Prions on 16 Feb, 14 at 64.4°S 34.7°E on 17 Feb, 19 at 54.5°S 40°E on 16 Apr and 18 at 46.9°S 37.2°E on 21 Apr.
Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*. A wide range of records from ARL, usually of singles north of the Antarctic Convergence. Southern records included one at 50.7°S 66.7°E (sea temp 5.1°C) on 3 Mar, and another single at 50.7°S 34°E (sea temp 4.5°C) on 24 Apr. His maximum hourly count was five at 37°S 23.8°E off S. Africa on 16 Mar.
White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*. ARL sighted this species on several occasions usually south of the Antarctic Convergence, including three at 52°S 17.5°E on 11 Feb, four at 57.4°S 77°E on 28 Feb, three at 48°S 44.8°E on 13 Apr and three at 47.9°S 35°E on 22 Apr.
Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*. A range of records from ARL, most from north of the Antarctic Convergence. Exceptions were hourly counts of seven at 52°S 17.5°E on 11 Feb, five at 54.6°S 19.5°E the next day, and seven at 56.3°S 21.1°E on 13 Feb (sea temp range 2.7-2.0°C). Largest counts included 12 at 44.5°S 18°E on 9 Feb, eight at 43.4°S 36.1°E on 3 Apr and eight at 46.4°S 40.4°E on 20 Apr. ARL also reported a single bird of this type in the N. Atlantic at 16.6°N 21.7°W, east of Cape Verde Islands on 29 Oct.

SHEARWATERS *PROCELLARIINAE*

Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*. A few were observed by ARL with two at 47.1°S 55.2°E on 9 Mar, two at 35.2°S 20°E off S. Africa on 19 Mar, four at 37.6°S 22.9°E on 28 Mar, five at 46.9°S 37.2°E on 21 Apr and four at 46.8°S 34.6°E on 26 Apr.
White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*. Observed by ARL almost daily south of 34°S in the SW Indian and Southern Oceans between 6 Feb and 2 May. He made large hourly counts of 25 at 64°S 43.7°E on 18 Feb, 30 at 64.5°S 60.2°E on 20 Feb, 26 at 63.7°S 84.1°E on 26 Feb, 30 at 48.1°S 59.2°E on 6 Mar, 50 at 42.8°S 34.8°E on 8 Apr, and 55 at 45.1°S 34.4°E on 27 Apr. ARL also saw one bird of the distinct Tristan sub-species *P.a. conspicillata* at

37°S 25.8°E on 16 Mar, and an unusual bird with conspicuous white plumage on the upper primaries at 44.9°S 46.3°E on 9 Apr.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*. MGW observed 250+ at 30.4°N 130°E in the East China Sea on 12 Jul.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*. Many reports from several observers from the eastern North and South Atlantic and Mediterranean. In the S. Atlantic, ARL saw five at 34.2°S 18.2°E on 5 Feb and two at 37°S 18.1°E on 7 Feb. PWJ observed 50 in small flocks on the water at 34.8°N 13.5°W over Ampere Seamount on 21 May, nine the next day at 29.9°N 15.3°W, north of the Canaries, one at 10°N 16.9°W off Guinea on 26 May, and six at 8.1°N 14.6°W off Sierra Leone on 6 Jun. GAJ saw one at 5.9°N 11.3°W on 27 May and four at 16.6°N 17.8°W near Senegal on 8 Jun. SH+DH had one just north of of Santander on 5 Apr, five at 46.3°N 04.7°W in the Bay of Biscay on 7 Sep, and one next day at 49.2°N 04.7°W in the Channel. There were many autumn observations by ARL from W. African waters, including 40/hr at 21.3°N 18.6°W on 27 Oct, 22/hr at 14.7°N 17.6°W on 2 Nov, 33/hr at 21.6°N 17.4°W on 4 Nov. In the same area, RMC counted ten at 24.7°N 17°W on 11 Nov, 54 at 19.2°N 17.8°W on 12 Nov and 12 at 11.9°N 17.7°W on 13 Nov. In the Mediterranean, AHT had small numbers at c.40.5°N 19°E in the Strait of Otranto on 1 Aug, three at 40.2°N 19°E on 20 Aug and several sightings in the Adriatic, including seven at 41.6°N 19°E on 21 Aug. PWJ saw 30 about 12nm south of Barcelona on 19 Oct, and 20 in the Straits of Gibraltar on 23 Oct.

Pink-footed Shearwater *Puffinus creatopus*. MC reported four at 35.3°S 73.3°W near their breeding area in Southern Chile.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. In the Southern Ocean, ARL had records from well south, near the Antarctic Convergence, with two birds at 48.9°S 17.6°E on 10 Feb, and a single the next day at 52°S 17.5°E (sea temps 5.3°. 2.7°C). In the N. Atlantic, MGF reported three at c.28°N 58°W on 24 May, PWJ recorded 13 at 10°N 16.9°W off Guinea on 26 May, and 100+ at 10.5°N 17.1°W on 7 Jun, in an area where there were many dolphins, flying fish and fishing boat activity. GAJ saw two at 6.2°N 11.9°W off Liberia on 17 May, two at 15.3°N 17.8°W on 8 Jun and one at 26.4°N 16.4°W south of the Canaries on 10 Jun.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*. GAJ described single birds at 29.5°N 15.5°W near the Canaries on 22 May and at 25.1°N 16.8°W the following day. Further north, SH+DH saw one at 48.5°N 05°W near Brittany on 6 Sep, singles at 46.4°N 04.5°W. 46.3°N 04.5°W in the Bay of Biscay, and two at 49.3°N 04.7°W in the Channel on 8 Sep. ARL observed four off Dakar on 20 Oct and a single at 21.6°N 17.4°W off Mauretania on 4 Nov.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*. An interesting series of reports from Antarctic waters, by ARL who tentatively identified the birds seen as Sooty Shearwaters, but described them as being more "robust" and with shorter bills than Sooties he is familiar with in the Atlantic. His records included hourly counts of 30 at 62.4°S 80.8°E on 23 Feb, 900 the next day at 63.3°S 83.9°E (sea temp 1.6°C), 25 at 64.6°S 85°E (sea temp 0.9°C) on 25 Feb and ten at 63.7°S 84.1°E on 26 Feb. It is most likely these records refer to the very similar Short-tailed Shearwater , which was observed in large numbers and specimens obtained at 64.3°S 84.1°E on 18 Feb'81, and at other

locations in Antarctic waters further east (Kerry et al 1983).
Manx Shearwater ***Puffinus puffinus***. SH+DH provided several records from the Channel and Bay of Biscay, including 60 counted in 10 mins at 48.4°N 05°W off Ushant on 4 Apr, seven just north of Santander on 5 Apr and 287, including 250 around a trawler at 49.2°N 04.7°W, on 8 Sep.
Hutton's Shearwater ***Puffinus huttoni***. An unidentified Shearwater at Eilat 18-21 June'92 (*Birding World* 7:274-278) seens to have been this species.
Balearic Shearwater ***Puffinus y. mauretanicus***. SH+DH counted 38 in 80 mins at 46.5°N 04.5°W in the Bay of Biscay on 7 Sep. PWJ reported 12 at 39.8°N 01.2°E, north of Ibiza, on 19 Oct'92.
Little Shearwater ***Puffinus assimilis***. ARL saw four at 48.9°S 17.6°E on 10 Feb, one at 42°S 38.1°E on 13 Mar, three at 42.8°S 34.8°E on 7 Apr and another the same day at 44.7°S 41.6°E (sea temp range 5.3°-16.4°C). He also reported two at 16.6°N 21.7°W, east of the Cape Verdes, on 29 Oct.

DIVING-PETRELS *PELECANOIDINAE*

Magellan Diving-petrel ***Pelecanoides magellani***. MC reported 40+ at 48.8°S 76.2°W in southern Chilean waters on 18 Oct, and another ten at 48.2°S 76.2°W the same day, and remarked "many were seen flying through waves". He also reported six at 35.3°S 73.3°W on 19 Oct.
Common Diving-petrel ***Pelecanoides urinator***. Reported from the vicinity of Heard and Kerguelen Islands by ARL, who saw two at 54.4°S 74.2°E on 1 Mar, four the next day at 52.3°S 70.5°E and 13 at 50.7°S 66.7°E on 3 Mar. He also saw two at 46.4°S 40.4°E SE of Prince Edward Island on 20 Apr.

STORM-PETRELS *HYDROBATIDAE*

Wilson's Storm-petrel ***Oceanites oceanicus***. Surprisingly few reports from ARL during his extensive Southern Ocean voyage, with two at 37°S 18.1°E on 7 Feb, two at 62.4°S 80.8°E on 23 Feb, three at 63.3°S 83.9°E the next day, one at 63.7°S 84.1°E on 26 Feb, and one at 45.6°S 47.6°E on 10 Apr.
Black-bellied Storm-petrel ***Fregetta tropica***. Hourly counts from ARL included four at 56.3°S 21.1°E on 13 Feb, with three the next day at 59°S 24.1°E, three at 48.1°S 59.2°E on 6 Mar, five at 43.4°S 36.1°E near the Sub-tropical Convergence on 3 Apr, five at 44.4°S 44°E on 8 Apr, and six at 47.9°S 35°E on 22 Apr.
British Storm-petrel ***Hydrobates pelagicus***. GAJ saw 20+ circling a dead whale at 46.4°N 07.8°W, in the Bay of Biscay, on 16 Jun.
Madeiran Storm-petrel ***Oceanodroma castro***. PWJ and GAJ reported 40 following their ship at 20.8°N 17.9°W off Mauretania on 24 May. [This sighting may refer to **Wilson's Storm-petrel** ***Oceanites oceanicus***, which is much more likely to follow ships]. RMC described five seen near Ascension Island on 17 Nov.
Leach's Storm-petrel ***Oceanodroma leucorhoa***. All records received were from NW African waters in autumn, and include two seen at 19.9°N 18.5°W on 25 Oct, two at 21.3°N 18.6°W on 27 Oct, one at 14.7°N 17.6°W on 2 Nov, and two at 19.3°N 17.8°W on 12 Nov, and five later the same day at 18.2°N 17.8°W.

Black Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma melania*. MCL commented the species was "numerous" around his ship, whilst at anchor at Guaymas, Mexico, 27.9°N 110.9°W on 19 Oct'92.
Ashy Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma homochroa*. MCL had two following his ship at 23.5°N 112°W near Baja California on 1 Nov'92, and six following the next day at 21.9°N 109.5°W.

TROPICBIRDS *PHAETHONTIDAE*

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*. PWJ and GAJ described and sent a photograph of one seen at 25.1°N 16.8°W off southern Morocco on 23 May. ARL reported one at 21°N 31.1°W on 27 Sep. In the equatorial Pacific MC reported one at 0.4°N 81°W off Ecuador on 5 Nov, and another the same day at 02.1°N 80.9°W.
Yellow-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*. One was seen in mid-Atlantic by MGF at c.33°N 40°W on 20 Jul.

GANNETS AND BOOBIES *SULIDAE*

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*. Many records from the Channel, Bay of Biscay and a few from further south. SH+DH recorded concentrations as follows:- 33 ad. at 49.9°N 04.3°W on 4 Apr, 51 ad. at 49.1°N 04.6°W the same day, 62 ad. + 8 imm. at 48.4°N 05°W off Ushant on 6 Apr, and 24 ad. + 5 imm at 49.8°N 04.3°W on 6 Sep. PWJ counted 20 in 2 hrs at 54.4°N 01.8°E southern Dogger Bank on 30 Oct'92. Further south, PWJ saw a 3rd yr. bird at 20.8°N 17.9°W off Mauretania on 24 May, and 35 ad. + 35 imm. in the Straits of Gibraltar on 23 Oct'92. GAJ recorded eight at 37.1°N 09.2°W near C. St. Vincent on 3 Nov, and one in Straits of Gibraltar on 13 Nov. Over an area of upwelling at 21.6°N 17.4°W, off Mauretania, ARL recorded 34 ad. + 8 imm. in an hour on 4 Nov. RMC recorded 23 imm. + 1 ad. nearby at 19.3°N 17.8°W on 12 Nov, and 2 imm. at 11.9°N 17.5°W next day.
Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*. RMC saw 100+ close to Ascension Island on 17 Nov. In the eastern Pacific, MCL recorded two at 21.9°N 109.5°W on 2 Nov'92.
Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*. PWJ and GAJ saw one catching flying fish disturbed by the ship's bow-wave at 10.5°N 17.1°W, off Guinea-Bissau, on 7 Jun. RMC saw 50 near Ascension on 17 Nov.

FRIGATEBIRDS *FREGATIDAE*

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*. MCL reported the species "numerous" whilst at anchor off Guaymas, Mexico, 27.9°N 110.9°W on 19 Oct'92.

PHALAROPES *PHALAROPODIDAE*

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. Many were seen by MCL off Guaymas, Mexico, on 19 Oct'92.
Phalarope Sp. Several records off W. Africa, not identified to species,

including two seen by ARL at 14.7°N 17.6°W on 2 Nov, four seen by RMC at 19.3°N 17.8°W on 12 Nov, who also saw 20 the same day at 18.2°N 17.8°W.

SKUAS *STERCORARIINAE*

Great Skua ***Catharacta skua***. SH+DH had many records in the Channel, in and around Ushant. Of note were three seen at 49.8°N 04.3°W on 4 Apr, five at 49.2°N 04.6°W the same day, eight at 49.9°N 04.4°W on 6 Sep, five at 49.8°N 04.3°W, also on 6th, and a remarkable count of 20 (including a group of 17) at 49.9°N 04.3°W on 8 Sep. GAJ recorded a single at 38.1°N 09.0°W off Setubal on 6 Dec, and another at 49.7°N 03.6°W on 9 Dec.
Southern Skua ***Catharacta (skua) antarctica***. ARL had occasional records of singles north of the Antarctic Convergence during his Southern Ocean voyages; at 40.1°S 17.9°E on 8 Feb, at 48.9°S 17.6°E on 10 Feb, at 48.1°S 59.2°E on 6 Mar, at 43.4°S 36.1°E on 3 Apr, and at 35.2°S 19.6°E near S. Africa on 2 May.
Chilean Skua ***Catharacta chilensis***. MC reported singles in Chilean waters; at 53.3°S 72.5°W in Straits of Magellan on 17 Oct, at 48.2°S 76.2°W the following day, and at 44°S 75.6°W on 19 Oct.
McCormick's Skua ***Catharacta maccormicki***. Recoveries from the tropics and Northern Hemisphere of McCormick's Skuas ringed in the vicinity of the Antarctic Peninsula have now been summarised by Bourne and Curtis (1994), who also comment on plumage bleaching and moult.
Pomarine Skua ***Stercorarius pomarinus***. ARL saw one at 34.2°S 18.2°E off S. Africa on 6 Feb. SH+DH recorded four at 50.6°N 01.8°W, SW of the Isle of Wight, on 5 May. PWJ and GAJ described two dark-phase birds with full tail-streamers heading north at 20.8°N 17.9°W off Mauretania on 24 May. Autumn records included two seen by SH+DH accompanying their ship at 46.6°N 04.5°W in the Bay of Biscay on 7 Sep, and two seen by PWJ in the North Sea at 53.9°N 0.3°E on 3 Sep'92. ARL had several sightings off W. Africa, with three at 19.9°N 18.5°W on 25 Oct, three the next day at 20.7°N 18.2°W, eight at 14.7°N 17.6°W on 2 Nov, and five at 21.6°N 17.4°W on 4 Nov. He saw one west of the Canaries at 27.8°N 20.9°W on 16 Jun. RMC saw eight at 19.3°N 17.8°W on 12 Nov, and five next day at 11.2°N 17.5°W.
Arctic Skua ***Stercorarius parasiticus***. SH+DH recorded one at 50.6°N 01.8°W SW of Isle of Wight on 5 May. Their autumn records included 11 counted in 30 mins at 50.1°N 04.3°W on 6 Sep, four at 43.7°N 03.8°W, north of Santander on 7 Sep, and a few in Santander Hr. the same day. PWJ saw one at 53.8°N 0.4°E, NE of the Humber on 3 Sep'92.
Long-tailed Skua ***Stercorarius longicaudus***. SH+DH recorded one in the Channel at 50.1°N 04.2°W on 6 Sep, and ARL saw one off Dakar on 20 Oct.

GULLS *LARINAE*

Common Gull ***Larus canus***. GAJ reported 1,000+ adults and immatures at Ijmuiden Locks on 19 Feb.
Lesser Black-backed Gull ***Larus fuscus***. Several reports from SH+DH from the Channel, where they counted 170 ad.+ 30 imm. around fishing vessels at 48.5°N 05°W, off Ushant, on 6 Sep. RMC counted ten in Tenerife Hr. on 10 Nov.

Yellow-legged Gull ***Larus cachinnans***. AHT reported 30-40 around his ship, whilst at anchor at 41.7°N 16.2°E, in the Gulf of Manfredonia, Italy, from 6-8 Aug, and 50+ at 41.6°N 19°E, in the Adriatic, on 21 Aug. GAJ reported three at 42.9°N 09.7°W off C. Finisterre on 4 Nov, 12 at 41.3°N 02.2°E, near Barcelona on 17 Nov, one following a 10-12m whale at 39.1°N 0.7°E on 18 Nov, and 50+ in Barcelona Hr. on 1 Dec. RMC reported 50+ in Tenerife Hr. on 10 Nov. SH+DH recorded 300 in Santander Hr. on 5 Apr, and remarked they seemed to stay close to the coast, and did not follow their ship.
Great Black-backed Gull ***Larus marinus***. SH+DH found the species common off the coast of Brittany about Cape du Raz/Ushant.
Great Gull ***Larus ichthyaetus***. All old British records have now been rejected by the BOU Records Committee (Vinicombe and Hopkins, 1993).
Mediterranean Gull ***Larus melanocephalus***. SH+DH reported six ad. + four imm. in Santander Hr. on 5 Apr, and a second year bird there, on 7 Sep. AHT had small numbers around his ship from 6-8 Aug, whilst at anchor at 41.7°N 16.2°E, in the Gulf of Manfredonia. GAJ reported two at 41.3°N 02.2°E off Barcelona on 17 Nov, and eight in the fairway approaching Setubal on 6 Dec.
Black-headed Gull ***Larus ridibundus***. SH+DH saw eight in Santander Hr. on 5 Apr, and c.70 there on 7 Sep. MGF saw one in Marinpol Hr., Sea of Azov, from 20-25 Jun. GAJ recorded 60+ in Barcelona Hr. on 1 Dec, and RMC saw ten at Tenerife on 10 Nov.
Little Gull ***Larus minutus***. A remarkable concentration observed off Brittany 4-6 Apr is reported by SH+DH - see Short Note on page 69. The spring passage across northern England, believed to be birds from the Irish Sea moving to their breeding grounds, has now been documented (Messenger *et al* 1993). Over 52,000 Little Gulls were counted on the Nile Delta lakes during Jan'90, and Egypt is now considered a major wintering area (Meininger et al 1993).
Sabine's Gull ***Xema sabini***. SH+DH reported two immatures at 48.2°N 05°W on 4 Apr. PWJ saw two in first summer plumage with incomplete blackish hoods at 20.8°N 17.9°W off Mauretania on 24 May.
Black-legged Kittiwake ***Rissa tridactyla***. GAJ recorded 300+ at Ijmuiden locks on 19 Feb. SH+DH had several records from the Channel, and larger counts include 220 ad. at 49.9°N 04.3°W on 4 Apr, 210 around a fishing vessel at 49.2°N 04.6°W later the same day, and 50 SW Eddystone Lt. on 6 Apr. PWJ recorded 100 mostly adult, and about 10% first winter, at 54.4°N 01.8°E on the southern Dogger Bank on 30 Oct'92.

TERNS *STERNINAE*

Black Tern ***Chlidonias niger***. GAJ recorded one at Ijmuiden locks on 22 Jun, and SH+DH saw one in the Bay of Biscay at 46.2°N 04.5°W on 7 Sep.
Caspian Tern ***Sterna caspia***. GAJ observed six at the entrance to Hanko Hr., Finland, on 8 Aug, and PWJ saw 20 eight miles south of Barcelona on 19 Oct'92.
Common Tern ***Sterna hirundo***. SH+DH reported two at 50.7°N 01.8°W on 5 May, four flying south in the Bay of Biscay at 47.9°N 05°W on 6 Sep, four at 43.7°N 03.8°W off Santander on 7 Sep, and 11 flying SW at 43.8°N 03.8°W the same day.

Arctic tern ***Sterna paradisaea***. SH+DH reported nine flying east at 50.5°N 01.8°W on 5 May, and three the same day at 49.8°N 01.6°W, just north of Cherbourg.
Bridled Tern ***Sterna anaethetus***. MGW reported 13 at 04.3°N 99°E, in the Straits of Malacca, on 5 Jul.
Little Tern ***Sterna albifrons*** Identification of Little, Least and Saunders' Terns has been discussed by Chandler and Wilds (1994).
Swift Tern ***Sterna bergii***. MGW reported ten at 29°N 32.8°E, in the Gulf of Suez, on 25 Jun.
Royal Tern ***Sterna maxima***. Two were reported by GAJ at 20.5°N 17.9°W off Mauretania on 24 May.
Sandwich Tern ***Sterna sandvicensis***. SH+DH saw two at 48.5°N 05°W on 4 Apr, two at 44.5°N 04°W in the Bay of Biscay the next day, and several immatures in Santander Hr. on 7 Sep. GAJ recorded two in Setubal Hr. on 13 Jun. ARL saw three offshore at 21°N 31.2°W on 29 Sep, and one at 21.2°N 31.6°W on 11 Oct. RMC saw five in Tenerife Hr. on 10 Nov, and two at Capetown on 1 Dec
White Tern ***Gygis alba***. RMC observed 50 near St. Helena on 19 Nov.

AUKS *ALCIDAE*

Razorbill ***Alca torda***. SH+DH recorded 18 at 48.1°N 05°W on 4 Apr, and PWJ counted 50 in 2 hrs. at 54.4°N 01.8°E on 30 Oct'92.
Common Guillemot ***Uria aalge***. SH+DH saw 40 at 48.4°N 05°W near Ushant on 4 Apr, PWJ recorded 200 in 2 hrs at 54.4°N 01.8°E, most in winter plumage, on 30 Oct'92, and SK reported 16 at 56.1°N 06°W, south of Mull, on 2 Jul.
Puffin ***Fratercula arctica***. SH+DH saw 20 at 48.2°N 05°W, off Brittany, on 4 Apr.

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LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA, 1993

Analysis by Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E. Royal Navy

The following landbird report sheets (numbers shown in brackets) were received during the last year. Extracts are shown in the appropriate geographical sections using the observer's initials:

Mr R.M. Curber (passenger aboard MV *St. Helena*). 6-14 Nov'93, Cardiff-Tenerife-Ascension-St. Helena-Capetown - East and South Atlantic (4).

LSA Mark Cutts. HMS *Scylla*, 16 Oct-6 Nov'93, Falklands to Panama - S.Atlantic/S. Pacific (2 + photos).

Sandy King. SV *Soren Larsen*, 1 May-18 Aug'93 - English Channel (1).

Captain P.W. Jackson MN. MV *Seki Cedar*, 15-18 Feb'93, Barcelona to Amsterdam - Med. (1); 2-5 Jun'93, Lagos-UK (1).

CPO G.A. Johnson MN. MV *Wild Lily*, Tees to Norway, Denmark and Finland - North Sea/Baltic 7-8 Aug'93 (1), 4 Sep'93 (1);

MV *City of Barcelona*, 23 Oct-4 Dec'93, Tees-Barcelona-Livorno and return - E.Atlantic and Med (2); MV *City of Sunderland*, Copenhagen-Tees-Barcelona-Amsterdam-Tees-Finland, 19 Jan-22 Feb'94 - North Sea, Channel, N. Atlantic, Med (1).

Chief Officer A.R. Louch MN. RRS *Discovery*. Four trips in NE/SE Atlantic: 25 Sep-19 Oct'93 Las Palmas-Dakar (1); 20 Oct-5 Nov'93 Dakar-Las Palmas (1); 11 Nov-6 Dec'93 Las Palmas-Cadiz (1); 27 Jan-13 Feb'94 Gib-Capetown (1).

A.H. Todd RFA. RFA *Bayleaf*, 5-17 Jun'93 - N. Atlantic/North Sea (1);27 Jul-25 Aug'93 - Med and Adriatic (2); 7-17 Sep N. Atlantic/North Sea (1).

Chief Officer Martin G. Weir MN. MV OOCL *Charisma*, 6-26 June'93 Med-Gulf of Suez (2 pages print-out).

Three forms were received from members of the Seabirds-at-Sea-Team (SAST) - Colin Barton (aboard HMS *Leeds Castle* and RV *Scotia*) and Genevieve Leaper + Max Nitske (RV *Dana*). These covered sightings in the North Sea 5-14 Feb'93 and 16-19 Mar'93, and in Western Approaches/Irish Sea 16-19 Mar'93.

The number of RNBWS regular reporters (sadly) continues to decline, but the quality of interesting records from the Met. Office, Bracknell, extracted from Met. Logs of weather reporting ships has been maintained; these are indicated by the notation (Met). We are greatly indebted for this valuable source, to Captain J.F.T. Houghton MN, Deputy Editor of *The Marine Observer*, and to Captain M.L.M. Coombs MN, who has made these extracts for many years, and we wish him well in his recent retirement. We welcome Captain E.J.O'Sullivan MN, as the latter's successor.

No records were received this year from the Gulf of Mexico/Caribbean (Section D) or Persian Gulf (Section H).

SECTION A - EAST ATLANTIC (EAST OF 30° W), BAY OF BISCAY and IBERLANT, also IRISH SEA

1992

On 21 Sep, an unidentified "hawk" was reported aboard MV *Coppename* (Met) at 48.6° N 17.5° W, 60nm north of Madeira. This may have been a Merlin *Falco columbarius*, but no description was given.

On 10 Dec, a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* landed aboard MV *Kukawa* (Met) at 10.9° N 17.1° W, 40nm west of Bijagos Is., Guinea,

On 23 Dec, a probable European Roller *Coracias garrulus*, was reported aboard MV *Barbara E* (Met) in position 06.7° N 17.1° W, 250nm SW Freetown, Sierra Leone.

1993

On 14 Feb, eight Swallows *Hirundo rustica* joined MV *Trinidad & Tobago* (Met), on passing Gibraltar, and remained two days. Three became bedraggled and less timid, and were eventually caught by the Chief Officer. Offered a dish containing water and dead cockroaches, they showed little interest, until a live cockroach was put in the dish, when two started to eat. One died, but the other two revived and were seen to fly off towards Las Palmas on 16th, at 31.0° N 15.2° W, 140nm NW Lanzarote. On 19 Feb, a "Grey

Wagtail" (possibly *Motacilla cinerea*, but no description given,) joined vessel - very lively, and fed on bird seed offered - no sign of distress; still aboard on 21st, when at 24.0° N 28.9° W, 650nm west of C. Blanco, Mauretania.

On 15 Feb, PWJ saw three Swallows aboard at 36.6° N 08.0° W, 40nm SE Cape St. Vincent. They arrived at dusk and departed 0655/16th; winds were easterly/F4. A White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* arrived aboard at 0830/18 Feb at 47.4° N 06.1° W, 70nm SW Ushant.

On 16 Mar, SAST(CB) recorded a single pipit *Anthus* sp. which flew past heading west, at 49.5° N 07.9° W, 60nm SW Scillies, and another heading NW at 0650 on 17th, when 22nm SW Pembroke (51.4° N 05.5° W); winds were SW/2. Further sightings in the Irish Sea on 19th included a bunting *Emberiza* sp. heading SW, Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* (3 flying south) at 53.6° N 04.3° W; Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* (2 heading south), and Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* (2 flying W +1 heading SE).

During the period 10-13 Jun, AHT was operating in the area of Rockall (57° N 13.7° W), and recorded: Swallow (one circling on 10th, 26nm S. Rockall - he had received similar reports over the previous two days); Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* on 10th - first seen with a large flock of Kittiwakes, then landed aboard briefly; Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* flew past on 12th; Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* circling at 0900/12th, when 15nm NW Rockall, then roosted in replenishment rig for several hrs; Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* one ♂ aboard on 13th at 57.8° N 13.7° W, 10nm north of Rockall.

In Lagos harbour on 2 Jun, GAJ saw a pair of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio*. The male had a red "tag" on its left leg. Also seen were Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (4) and a Sandmartin *Riparia riparia*.

On 4 Jun, AHT had good views of a Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* following his ship at 4.1° N 02.9° W, 58nm SSW Ghana. He subsequently saw many ("100s") of Eurasian Swifts *Apus apus* in Setubal harbour.

At 0730 on 25 Aug, AHT found a Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (juv) aboard, with both feet entangled in "wire/cotton twine", which may have been fragments of mist-netting. It took 20 mins careful cutting to remove this "spaghetti-like" material, but the bird was eventually released apparently none the worse. Posn was 36.6° N 0/9° W, 50nm SE Cape de Gata.

On 27 Jul, AHT saw 12 Black Kites *Milvus migrans* flying south across the Gib Straits, 7nm SE Tarifa.

On 7 Sep, AHT saw a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* circling ship at 49.5° N 6.0° W, 150nm south of Cape Clear. On 8th, a Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* and a Northern Wheatear (♀) was aboard briefly at 49.3° N 08.5° W, 150nm SW Scillies.

On 25 Sep, FPV *Vigilant* (Met) was overflown by 400 unidentified "grey geese" *Anser* sp., flying south over Hulborn Head. Ship's position was 58.7° N 04.7° W, 50nm north of Cape Wrath. At 0830z on 30 Sep, another group of 60, in V-formation heading 170° at 17 kts was recorded in postion 58° N 07.8° W, 55nm NW Lewis, (Hebrides).

On 27 Sep, ARL recorded a Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, which alighted aboard at 22.7° N 27.6° W, 360nm NNW C. Verdes. It was quite lively, and tame. Winds were NE/5.

On 20 Oct a Scops Owl *Otus scops* was observed closely by ARL, roosting aboard (0900-1300) at 14.9° N 18.1° W, 60nm NW Cap Vert. A *phylloscopus* warbler was also aboard, but was not as tame as the owl! A Northern Wheatear was sighted briefly, and departed towards land.

On 23 Oct, GAJ recorded two Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* sheltering aboard at 40.3° N 09.9° W, 60nm west of Portugal. Winds were NNE/7.

On 23 Oct, ARL saw a Swallow circling at 18.5° N 19.2° W, 180nm west of Mauretania (winds NNE/6-7); it was found dead on 26th. On 27th, another Swallow was sighted at 21.4° N 18.5° W, 100nm west of Cap Blanc (winds calm for last 24 hrs.)

On 5 Nov, GAJ recorded a Black Redstart, and a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (♀) in the Bay of Biscay, 47.3° N 06.3° W, 100nm SW France. A Chaffinch (♀) was found dead next day, on passing Cape Tarifa.

On 7 Nov, RMC recorded Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, a "chiffchaff" (no details), and Chaffinch (2) at 43.3° N 09.7° W, 24nm NW Cape Finisterre. Winds were NW/F1-6. They remained all day, feeding around some pigs being carried on deck, and were still there next day, when 120nm WSW Lisbon. At 1150 on 9th, when 130nm east of Madeira (32.9° N 14.6° W), a Black Redstart appeared aboard, and left 15 mins later. Also aboard were two Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (2), Starling (3) and Chaffinch (2). All had left by 10th, on arrival Santa Cruz, Tenerife. Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* (1-2) were seen flying over the harbour wall. Seen ashore, were White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, "willow-chiffs" *phylloscopus* sp., and a Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus* presumed).

On 13 Nov, ARL examined a probable Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* ("long clawed feet") which arrived at daybreak at 27.8° N 22.4° W, 240nm W. Canaries.

On 16 Nov, at 49.2° N 06.4° W, 90nm NW Ushant, and heading south across the Bay of Biscay, RMC

recorded late migrants including Starling (groups of c30 (0815), 4 and 16, some of which landed aboard), Pied Wagtail, Black Redstart (at least one, throughout day), Chaffinch (1+2 aboard), Blackbird *Turdus merula* (1♀ aboard), Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (1♂ very tired, on deck).

At 0800 on 24 Nov, ARL recorded a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (adult ♀), was sighted roosting aboard at 28.8° N 18.5° W, 35nm west of Canaries (Las Palmas). It was seen to catch and eat a Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucodroma*. It allowed approach to within 2m, and departed east on completion of feed.

SECTION B - ENGLISH CHANNEL, and NORTH SEA

1992

Ringed recovery. On 28 May, a Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* was found freshly dead aboard MV *Kowloon Bay* (Met) on arrival Rotterdam; it had probably arrived in the English Channel. It was found to have a BTO ring (no. F.82056), from which it is known to have been ringed as a first year bird on 31 Aug'90, at Ickelsham, Sussex.

On 30 Sep, a wide range of species were reported aboard MV *Telnes* (Met) during passage up the NE coast from Cromer to anchorage off the Tyne, including juvenile Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* (2), Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* (2), Robins *Erithacus rubecula* (2), Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* (2), Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (2), Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* (1). The weather was thick fog, with visibility less than one nm.

On 3 Oct, three probable Goldcrests were aboard MV *Matco Avon* (Met) at 54.2° N 02.5° E, whilst on passage Brunsbuttel to Scarborough.

1993

A number of landbird sightings were reported by members of SAST during the period 5-14 Feb including:

On 5 Feb, a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* heading SE at 59.3° N 01.0° E, 85nm SW Shetlands; on 11 Feb, Wigeon *Anas penelope* (2♀, 1♂) heading SE at 1140 at 54.2° N 03.2° E, 100nm NE Norfolk, also a Dunlin *Calidris alpina* circling ship at 1620 at 54.2° 02.9° E; winds during this period were SE/2-3; a Skylark *Alauda arvensis* at 1320 on 13 Feb at 58.4° N 04.7° E, 36nm SW Norway, also Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (flying south); also two Wigeon (♂ and ♀ heading SE) and Pochard *Aythia ferina* (2♂ flying west), at 56.9° N 04.3° E, 100nm SW Norway.

At 0800 on 27 Mar, Chief Officer John Nicholls (RNBWS member) took excellent photos of a Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* aboard MV *Harting* (Met), found roosting on deck at 53.1° N 02.7° E, 40nm NE coast of Norfolk; it may have landed aboard at dusk the previous evening when passing through the Dogger Bank area. When disturbed, it flew into the Bosun's cabin. After being caught and released on deck, it flew off in the direction of Norfolk. He later photographed a Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* ♀ aboard in the English Channel.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* aboard MV *Harting* at 53.1°N 02.7°E, 40nm NE Norfolk, 27 Mar'93. Photo: Captain J.B. Nicholls MN.

MV *Shetland Service* (Met) reported that on 14 Apr, the following species were recorded during "the previous 28 days" in position 57.5° N 00.5° E, 75nm east of Peterhead: Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Chaffinch, Robin, Starling, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Cuckoo, "pipits" and "wagtails". During the period 10 May - 7 Jun, species included Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Swift *Apus apus*,

Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Black Redstart, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareolaa*, Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Chiffchaff, "Woodlark" (but no details given), Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, and crows *Corvus* sp..

MV *Seillean* (Met) recorded the following species during the period 14-19 May in position 58.4° N 0.9° E, 90nm ENE Kinnaird's Hd.: Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, Swallow, House Martin *Delichon urbica*, Collared Dove, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and Curlew.

Ashore in Le Havre harbour on 23 Jun, AHT recorded Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* and a Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirius*

On 17 Sep, AHT saw two Oystercatchers (flying south in company with two Fulmars) at 59.0° N 03.4° E, 60nm west of Stavanger.

In the Baltic, *Baltic Eider* (Met), in position 57.8° N 19.8° E on 4 Jun, reported a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* sighted flying from the north end of Gotland SE'ly towards Latvia. It showed no interest in the ship.

At noon on 7 Aug, GAJ noted a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striatus* and a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* aboard at 57.4° N 19.3° E, 25nm east of Sweden. In Hawko Harbour, Finland, on 8th, he recorded White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, Goosander *Mergus merganser* (4), White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopus leucotos* (on a dead tree on dock-side), Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Eurasian Wigeon (22), Greylag Geese *Anser anser* (5), Grey Heron, also six Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia* (apparently nested on isolated rock ledges at entrance to harbour).

SECTION C - WEST ATLANTIC (WEST OF 30°)W

1992

At 0230Z 23 May, a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (Met) landed aboard vessel's topgallant yard of SV *Eye of the Wind* (Met) in mid-Atlantic, in position 19.4° N 40.9° W, some 930nm WNW C. Verde Is., and remained until 26th, at 20° N 42.9° W, 1,040nm NE French Guiana.

1993

On 27 July a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* settled aboard LPG/C *Bargas* (Met) at 26.3° N 52.3° W, 750nm SE Bermuda.

SECTION D - GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN

NIL records

SECTION E - MEDITERRANEAN

1993

Radar records. MV *Peninsular Bay* (Met) reported that between 111600 and 121700 March'93, when on passage westwards through the south Ionian Sea and Malta Channel, (34.5° N 21.5° W, 90nm N. Ras el Hamama to 37.5° N 10.8° E, off Cape Bon) flocks of large birds, 20 to 50 in each flock were observed, first on radar at 7nm, presumably migrating NNE at 20 kts. Similar echoes were observed on the radar, later that evening. (Comment by MBC. This report is highly interesting to me. It is a pity the birds could not have been identified, (no description is given) but I suspect they might have been herons, probably Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* or Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, both species of which I have observed migrating in this area.)

On 6 Jun, MGW recorded a Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* aboard, at 36.2° N 15.2° E, 30nm SSE C. Passero; possibly one of a flock seen at Port Said on 4th. A Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* landed aboard at 0600/20 Jun, in Gib Straits (13.5nm W. Europa Pt.) Ship's course was 082/22kts, and it was still aboard at dusk. A Palm Dove was seen to land aboard at 0800/21st at 37.2° N 5.6° E, 20nm N. Algeria. also four possible Melodious Warblers *Hippolais polyglotta*. They remained 4+ hrs.

In the Adriatic, AHT saw a Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* aboard 1 hr., 15nm NE Otranto, on 1 Aug. Two Swifts *Apus apus* flew past, heading west, on 10 Aug at 43.4° N 14.5° R, 35nm ESE Ancona. Two wheatears *Oenanthe* sp, were seen briefly, when at anchor in the Gulf of Manfredonia on 18 Aug - thought to be either ♀ Northern Wheatear *O. oenanthe* or Black-eared *O. hispanica*. On 21 Aug, AHT noted full details of a probable Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* at 42.0° N 18.2° E, 30nm SE former Yugoslavia. Also seen was a Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, flying west.

MV *City of Barcelona* (Met) reported at 1700z on 23 Sep, a large flock (60-70) Swallows *Hirundo rustica* settled aboard, on various rails and masts, in position 41.50N 06.9° E, (5nm SSE Hyeres, S. France). Moderate S'ly and SW'ly winds, with frontal weather had been experienced for the previous 10hrs, and the birds remained for 9 hrs.

On 28 Oct, GAJ recorded numerous migrants 75nm SSW Marseilles, 42.1° N 05.0° W, which included Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*(1+5), Robin *Erithacus rubecula* (4), Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (8+), Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (6+), White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* (3), Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (4), also at least 14 unidentified warblers. Winds were SE'ly F4.

On 1 Nov, GAJ recorded a White Wagtail, close off Barcelona, and examined in the hand a possible Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*.

On 14 Nov, GAJ recorded a Black Redstart (♀) 25nm SW Majorca (38.9° N 02.8° E), and a Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*) on the quay-side in Livorno Harbour. A further single Black Redstart (♀) was seen in the Gulf of Lions (41.8° N 04.1° E, 45nm east of Cape St. Sebastian) on 17th, and another 15nm SE Cartegena on 18th. A Pied Wagtail (juv) was seen at Barcelona Fairway Buoy on 4 Dec.

SECTION F - RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

1992

On 9 Aug, a probable Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* landed aboard MV *Staffordshire*, 20nm off Aden, in position 12.6° N 45.2° E, and was seen eating a small unidentified bird.

1993

On 25 Jun, MGW recorded four possible Pale Rock Sparrows *Petronia brachyldactyla* aboard in the Gulf of Suez. A Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* was aboard 4+ hrs in central Red Sea (24.5° N 36.0° E) on 26th.

On 25 Aug two Hoopoes *Upupa epops* joined LPG/C *Bargas* (Met) in the Red Sea. On 28 Aug a "small brown kestrel/hawk" was observed (probably a Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*), also three Collared Doves, at 12.7° N 45.6° E, Gulf of Aden, 50nm SW Yemen.

SECTION G - INDIAN OCEAN AND ARABIAN SEA

1993

An unidentified heron which landed aboard MV *British Reliance* (Met) on 13 Sep, in position 09° N 53.7° E, 150nm from Ras Hafun, Somalia, is most likely to have been a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*.

ARL recorded a number of remarkable migrants far from land, in the Southern Indian Ocean. On 8 Apr, a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* was seen briefly at 44.5° S 43.5° E, 1,500nm south of S. Africa, and 300nm NW Crozet Is. The weather over the previous 20 hrs had been fog/drizzle and N/NW winds - a depression had passed to north. On 17 Apr, a Yellow-billed Egret *Egretta intermedia* roosted overnight at 52.6° S 50.1° E, 1,400 SE Cape of Good Hope, 350nm SSE Marion Island; winds for the previous three days NW'ly gales and mod. vis. At 1700 on 2 May, six Yellow-billed Egrets arrived from SW and departed NE at 35.1° S 19.4° E, 35nm SW C. Aghulas - rain showers and N'ly gales for previous 48 hrs.

SECTION H - PERSIAN GULF AND GULF OF OMAN

NIL records

SECTION I - PACIFIC, CHINA SEA, YELLOW SEA, CORAL SEA AND PHILIPPINE SEA

1992

Hitchike by American Kestrel from California, USA to Peru. MV *BP Argosy* (Met) reported that, when passing the California Baja peninsula, (date not given) a number of small unidentifiable "hawk-like" birds joined the ship and stayed 2-3 days, catching and eating a number of "sparrow-sized birds". When the "sparrows" had been eaten, all but one disappeared. This was fed by the Second Engineer with red meat. On arrival at Callao, Peru (on 20 Oct), the hawk initially refused to leave, but left after two days. **(Comment by MBC.** from the description given, and also the sketches and photographs, this is clearly identified as an American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*. This species is commonly recorded aboard ships, usually off the eastern coast USA, preying on small migrants, but a long-distance "hitch-hike" on this scale (c2,700nm) is highly unusual, and I am unaware of such journeys in the eastern Pacific.)

On 5 Dec, four Cliff Swallows *Petrochelidon pyrrhonata* (identified by reddish rumps) came aboard MV *Pacific Teal* at 09.6° N 92.2° W, 270nm SW El Salvador, East Pacific, and remained 24 hrs. On 7th, a Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* aboard in Sea of Japan, 38.6° N 137.7° E, 70nm north of Honshu.

On 23 Dec, whilst stopped and drifting in position 27.6° N 125.7° W, 600nm west of California, three probable Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* landed aboard MV *Wellington Star* (Met).

1993

On 14 Mar, when on passage Yokohama to Hong Kong, a large bird, identified from the sketch as a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, came aboard MV *Jervis Bay* (Met) in the Taiwan Strait, and remained until the outer approaches to Hong Kong on 15th.

On 5 May, BP *Admiral* (Met), on passage Inchon to San Francisco, reported an unidentified owl which came aboard at 36° N 155° W - 800nmm NE Hawaiian Is - and remained four days. It consumed at least five "storm-petrels". It was last seen on 8th, when at 37° N 135° W, 700nm west of San Francisco. Photos were taken (but not yet developed). The general opinion of the crew was Barn Owl. (COMMENT by MBC. Identification is not possible without description and/or photo. The taking of birds is not typical of Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, and Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* seems much more probable, though both species have been recorded previously in this area.)

At 1800z on 12 May, two probable Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* landed briefly aboard MV *Pacific Teal* (Met). in position 07.9° N 86.3° W, 130nm SW Costa Rica.

MV *Nosac Cedar* (Met) reported that on 26 Aug, an unidentified duck, similar to a female Mallard, landed aboard at 54.1° N 85.2° W, 200nm SW Kodiak I. It remained 30 mins before flying off northerly.

On 23 Sep a "small hawk" observed attempting to land aboard at 50.6° N 144° W, 500nm WSW Charlotte Is. (COMMENT by MBC. Many species seem possible, but description best suits Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus*).

At 1405 on 30 Oct, MC photographed an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, which landed aboard at 07.9° S 80.2° W, 60nm W. Truxillo, Peru. It was generally shabby and took no food; it departed at 1215/31st at 03.7° S 08.2° W.

On 4th November, MC photographed a Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia* which landed aboard in an exhausted state 60nm west of Ecuador at approx 1.0° S 81.0° W, but died 24 hrs later. A Cattle Egret arrived at 0745/5th at 0.4° N 81.0° W, and remained until 1440, heading south at 02.12° N 80/9° W. At noon on 6th, a Great White Egret *Egretta alba* was also seen (and photographed) for 10 mins on 6 Nov, when 130nm SW Panama, at 6.5° N 80.1° W; also about 20 Barn Swallows and two Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus*, which stayed until nightfall. They were seen to feed on at least two swallows.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* aboard HMS *Scylla*, at 00.4°N 81.0°W, 60nm west of Ecuador, 5 Nov'93. Photo: LSA Mark Cutts. RN.

SECTION J - SOUTH ATLANTIC
1993

At noon on 12 Feb, a small dove was photographed aboard FPV *Falklands Desire* (Met) at 49.2° S 60.2° W, and subsequently identified as an Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata*. It was in a clearly exhausted state, and was fed aboard with lentils and split peas, and given water. It was last seen aboard at 1100 on 13th shortly after the vessel entered Falkland Sound, and was presumed to have flown ashore.

On 16 Oct, MC photographed a Rufous-collared Sparrow *Junco capensis* aboard 40 mins at 52.7° S 66.2° W, 80nm east of Magellan Straits, Argentina.

M.B.C.

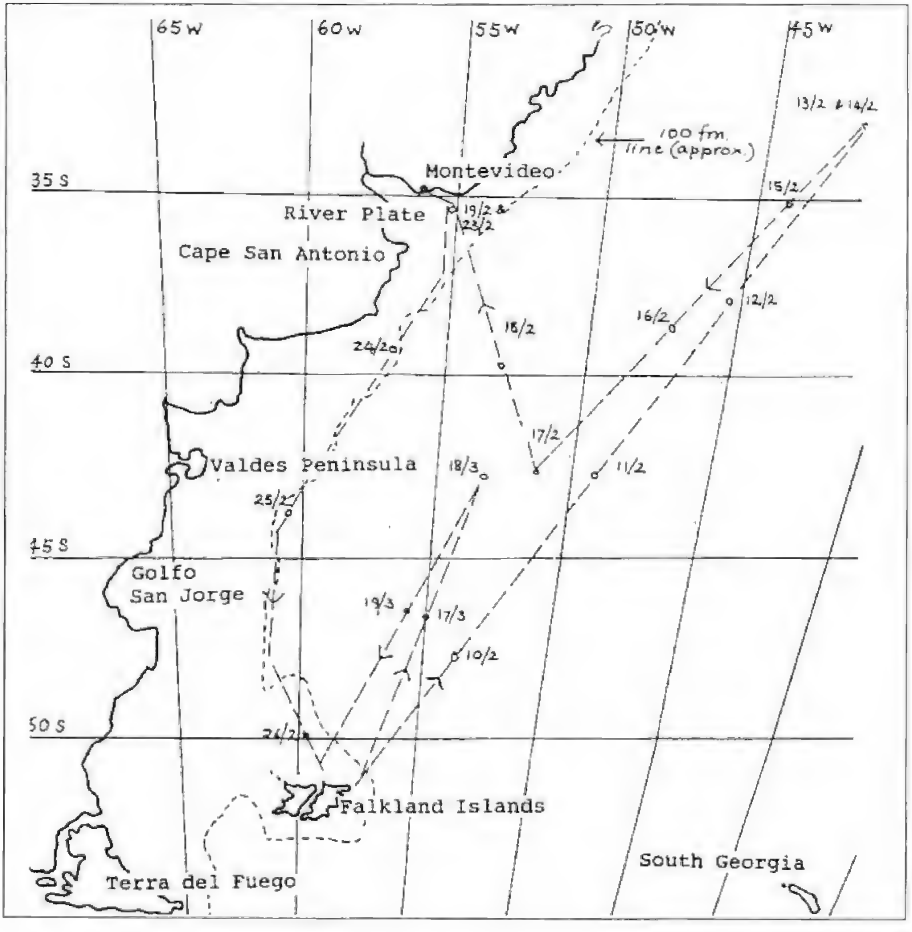
FURTHER SOUTH ATLANTIC RECORDS

December 1991 to May 1992

by First Officer (SE) (Comms) W.F. Curtis, RFA

Introduction. During the period 6 Dec'91 to 15 May'92, I was aboard RFA *Grey Rover*, stationed in the Falkland Islands. As part of the duties of the station tanker, as well as supporting the Royal Navy presence in that area, we also undertook patrols of the Falkland Islands Conservation Zone (FICZ), within a 150nm radius centred on the centre of Falkland Sound. Patrols off either West or East Falkland normally lasted six days and, where possible, included a visit to a settlement; though in these cases, shore leave depended much on the weather.

Two voyages were also made to the north of the area (see Map); 9-26 Feb to meet a south-bound warship, including a visit to Montevideo; the second was of four days only (16-20 March), with no port visit. *Grey Rover* left the Falklands on 15 May for the West Indies, arriving at Barbados on 1 June.



During all these periods at sea, it was endeavoured to undertake two counts daily, of one hour each - one in the morning, and one during the late afternoon or evening. But more frequent or longer counts were sometimes possible in areas of either expected high numbers, or unusual ocurrences (e.g. encounters with fishing vessels). Fishing fleet activity was especially high near the shelfbreak off the Valdes Peninsula.

The records have been loosely divided into four groups:- The Falklands/FICZ (Part I); the two northward voyages (Part II); the three voyages to South Georgia (Part III) and the passage to Barbados (Part IV). These are listed either to confirm earlier occurrences, particularly in distribution and status, or to report large numbers. Comments are made on significant records.

General Weather. My impression was that there were less occasions of strong winds during the period under review, compared with my last two visits in '86 and '87 (Curtis 1988, and Bourne 1989). On only eight days did the strength of the wind reach gale force 8 - all from the westerly quadrant. There were more days with northerly winds; conditions which tend to give fog, or at least drastically reduced visibility, along the northern coast. (This accounts for a predominance of patrolling to the south, rather than to the north, especially when proceeding to the far western areas.) At no time did snow lie at Mare Harbour, though occasional snow/sleet flurries occurred during late April/early May. Snow was seen to lie on the high ground on only a few occasions. The summer was the hottest on record with several stable spells, one of which produced a maximum of 84°F on 21 Jan; the highest ever recorded in the islands. It should be stressed that records have only been maintained at Mount Pleasant Airport for a few years, and this location arguably records higher temperatures than Port Stanley, in summer, by nature of its position. (I should not raise the old chestnut of global warming, but in late '92 the ozone depletion area actually reached over the mainland of South America, and the Falklands).

Icebergs. The other feature of this period was the large number of icebergs in the vicinity of South Georgia. On two voyages there we "dog-legged" (i.e. sailed almost due east until near the island, then headed SE), thus reducing the distance travelled south of the Antarctic Convergence. In this area of cold water, icebergs were common, and a member of the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) stated that he had never seen so many in 20 years travelling to and from the island. Off Cooper Island, in April, some 400 were counted on the radar in an area of 150 square miles. The "mega-berg" - variously reported as being "as large as Wales" or "the size of the Isle of Wight", and probably somewhere between the two - was regrettably not seen. Such was its size that it actually developed its own mini weather-system, which normally meant fog. During its latter days, it was seen from the Ascension/Falklands airbridge, well to the north of the Falklands. The icebergs encountered by *Grey Rover* some 400nm north of the Falklands in May were thought to have originated from this monster.

Sea temperatures recorded during this deployment were between 1.5° and 3.0°F warmer than in either 1986 or 1987. However, it must be stressed that these temperatures are taken from the engine room and, as I was in a different class of vessel in those years, this may not be a true comparison.

Wandering Albatross ***Diomedea exulans***. It is my opinion, supported by my observations this year compared with '82, '84, '86 and '87, that this species has declined in the area. This view has been confirmed by members of the BAS, who have stated that birds from South Georgia are falling victims to the long-line fishing industry, particularly along the shelf-break to the north of the Falklands, and off the River Plate (see Briggs *et al* 1993.) During '92, numbers recorded in the FICZ were down by about 35%. As with previous visits to this area, very few were seen close inshore off the islands, invariably being well out to sea over the deeper water.

Royal Albatross ***Diomedea epomophora***. Recorded on many days whilst off E. Falkland, invariably over the shallower water of the Continental Shelf, with slightly more birds off the north coast and near the southern entrance to Falkland Sound, than to the east of the islands. The numbers recorded were usually one to four, but occasionally up to seven, with nine to the north of Cape Dolphin on 23 March and 18 between Sea Lion Island and Barren Island on 9 Feb. The only concentration noted over deeper water was of eight in company with other seabirds accompanying two stern-trawlers some 80nm to the south of Falkland Sound on 27 Jan.

Of the 129 individuals recorded in the vicinity of the islands, 74 were attributed to the nominate race (*D.e.epomophora*) - 58%. No particular bias concerning the distribution of the two races was evident during this period, against a definite tendency of the northern race (*D.e.sanfordi*) to be present off the east and north coast in '86 and '87.

It is of interest that no Royal Albatrosses (or Wanderers) were recorded whilst to the west of the islands - i.e. in the arc from Cape Meredith round to Pebble Island. It should be noted, however, that at least three times as many days were spent at sea in the eastern sector, than in the western one.

Black-browed Albatross ***Diomedea melanophris***. As to be expected, very common near Beauchene Island and to the west of W. Falkland, both areas of large breeding colonies. Only small numbers were encountered during the breeding season to the east and north of E. Falkland. c3,500 with the trawlers on 27 Jan, 80nm to the south of the islands, were, as far as could be ascertained, all adults. No juveniles or immatures were observed amongst the c7,000 NE of Pebble Island on 23 March. The first juvenile recorded to the east of E. Falkland was on 1 Apr; this compares with similar aged birds seen off the NW on 25 Feb.

Shy Albatross ***Diomedea cauta***. Two adults of the nominate race *D.c.cauta*, with trawlers 80nm to the south of Falkland Sound on 27 Jan - the 7th record for the Falklands.

Grey-headed Albatross ***Diomedea chrysostoma***. The first to appear off the Falklands were three on 22 April near Cape Pembroke. This compares with first sightings in '86 of 10 April, and 23 March in '87 (but in '92 the vessel was in port from 9-22 Apr). It became more widespread by early May off the east coast, but was not seen away from this area until 10th, when 17 were recorded in the vicinity of Speedwell Island.

Southern Fulmar ***Fulmarus glacialoides***. The first of the autumn to be recorded in Falklands waters were nine off Cape Pembroke on 22 April (but

the ship had been in port for the previous 14 days); the earliest dates for '86 and '87 were 6 April and 29 March, respectively. Numbers increased rapidly from this date, with up to 50 seen on several occasions in early May off Choiseul Sound, and to the south of Falkland Sound.

Pintado Petrel ***Daption capense***. Two were recorded near Bird Island on 19 Jan, with three the following morning near Choiseul Sound. These two isolated records were the only sightings until 22 Apr, when eight were off Cape Pembroke. As with the previous species, it became quite widespread from that date.

Kerguelen Petrel ***Lugensa brevirostris***. Two, some 12nm to the east of Lively Island on 24 Apr.

Atlantic Petrel ***Pterodroma incerta***. One, 75nm north of Cape Pembroke in the evening of 9 Feb, and one 100nm north of E. Falkland on 16 March.

Soft-plumaged Petrel ***Pterodroma mollis***. One, 15nm to the east of Lively Island on 7 March, was the only record.

Great Shearwater ***Puffinus gravis***. One to nine birds seen daily to the east of the islands from early Jan, and throughout that month. 24 on 3 Feb, some 20nm east of Beauchene Island, being the first count in excess of ten; numbers increased thereafter with 70 on 9th, off Cape Pembroke, but remained fairly static until late April, when an influx into the area occurred with 140 off that same area on 19th; 250 were recorded off East Cove on 23rd, increasing to 350 the following day. On 25th, a raft of c800 were some 3nm north of Cape Carysfort, though this flock had decreased to 200 the following day; 250 off the southern entrance to Falkland Sound on 27th (very few were seen to the west of the islands, with up to 15 near the Jasons occasionally). 150 were present off East Cove up to 5 May, whilst 160 were between Speedwell Island and Sea Lion Island on 10th. Many of the birds seen from late April onwards were in heavy wing-moult.

Sooty Shearwater ***Puffinus griseus***. Widespread to the east of the islands, with slightly smaller numbers both to the north and south of E. Falkland. As in '86 and '87, birds were seen on several evenings to be flying towards George Island. The largest gatherings recorded were c4,500 about 12nm east of Cape Pembroke on 9 Feb, and 1,200 near Volunteer Point on 22 March; both parties were obviously associated with the nearby breeding colony on Kidney Island. This species was outnumbered by Great Shearwater off E. Falkland by late April. No birds were seen in moult, in contrast to Great Shearwater.

Falkland (Great) Skua ***Catheracta (skua) antarctica*** and **McCormick's Skua** ***C.(s).maccormicki***. The first was recorded in small numbers throughout the islands, though generally in larger numbers along the southern entrance to Falkland Sound, and in Choiseul Sound. This latter location is much favoured in autumn, with numbers increasing from about 10-20 in early Jan; up to between 50-80 by late March/early Apr. It is also during this period that McCormick's Skuas may be encountered but also, in varying numbers, some extremely pale-bodied and confusing birds. The first was actually seen on 1 Jan, noted as being "smallish with a quite pale uniform neck and breast, shading darker to the lower belly; nape very pale; head pale, except for a very dark distinctive cap; back and wings dark; bill large". A second, on 13th, was basically similar, with creamy brown underparts, and occasional slightly darker flecks along the flanks.

By the end of Feb, out of a total of 40 skuas in Choiseul Sound, at least seven showed similar characteristics, whilst by 4 March the number of "pale" birds had risen to at least 16 out of about 40. These pale birds were not recorded anywhere else in the Falkland Islands and, by the end of April almost all had departed; though one on 4 May was described as:

"Overall structure and build more reminiscent of Pomarine Skua than Bonxie, though the body was bulkier, being deeper bellied rather than the deep, barrel-chested impression of Pomarine... There was a definite clean division between the pale body and the dark wings, which were uniformly cold brownish/black, with prominent white flashes on the primaries, with relatively pointed hand - not the more blunt-ended wings of a typical Bonxie...." To my eyes, this bird had features, both in coloration and build, which could be associated with either Falkland Skua or McCormick's Skua. (for fuller details, and discussion, see Bourne & Curtis (1994).

Long-tailed Skua ***Stercorarius longicaudus***. A single adult flying south some 10nm east of East Cove early on 4 Feb.

Grey-headed Gull ***Larus cirrocephalus***. One observed for about 30 minutes near South Jason Island on 25 March retained almost full summer plumage. The first record for the Falkland Islands.

Trudeau's Tern ***Sterna trudeau***. One, in winter plumage, being harried by two Striated Caracaras, near Steeple Jason Island on 30 Apr. The first record for the Falkland Islands.

Landbirds. (See Woods 1988)

Regular observations were made, whilst in port, of the Bertha's Beach area (for map of area see Winter 1991)and, to a lesser degree, off Kukri Island and Fox Island round to Pandoro Point. Bertha's Beach has long been recognised as holding good numbers of wintering **White-rumped Sandpipers** ***Calidris fuscicollis*** and **Sanderling** *C. alba* as well as the local **Two-banded Plover** ***Charadrius falklandicus***. During 1992, White-rumped Sandpipers peaked at 450, Sanderling at 82, and Two-banded Plover at 350. Occasionally, more uncommon or rare waders are reported, with '92 being no exception.

Snowy Egret ***Egretta thula***. One in company with Cattle Egrets at Bertha's Beach pond on 11 April - the fourth record for the islands.

Cattle Egret ***Bubulcus ibis***. Few were seen this year, compared with '87, all being during April, with 12 at Bertha's Beach pond on 11th; four some 8nm east of Cape Pembroke on 22nd. 22 about 12nm east of Fox Island on 23rd; 12 observed 15nm north of Cape Carysfort on 26th and 18 on Flat Jason Island on 30th.

Baird's Sandpiper ***Calidris bairdii***. Four on 21 Jan, with three still present on 23rd. Two on 30 March; two on 11 April and three on 17th. All were at Bertha's Beach. They no doubt occur annually along this stretch of beach.

Pectoral Sandpiper ***Calidris melanotos***. One was flushed from a small pond adjacent to Bertha's Beach on 30 March; a vagrant with three previous records.

Ruddy Turnstone ***Arenaria interpres***. One at the south end of Bertha's Beach on 29 March was seen again the following day. There have been unconfirmed records of this species prior to 1921, but lists of species from the islands produced in both 1926 and 1961 omitted them - possibly the first

definite record for the Falklands.

Surfbird ***Aphriga virgata***. One on Kukri Island on 8 March. This species occasionally winters in Tierra del Fuego. The first record for the Falkland Islands.

American Golden Plover ***Pluvialis dominica***. Two near the tank farm at Mare Harbour on 12 April - the first record for the Falkland Islands.

Hudsonian Godwit ***Limosa haemastica***. Three at Fox Bay on 26 March.

Barn Swallow ***Hirundo rustica***. One, hawking over Bertha's Beach pond on 14 December.

Part II - Excursions to the north (See Map).

Penguins sp. ***Spheniscidae*** sp. No live penguins were observed on either voyage, but on 25 Feb, in the vicinity of the fishing fleet at ca 45°S 60°W, 19 dead birds were counted in the water, in one hour. It is thought they were Rockhoppers *Eudyptes chryscome*, only because on none were seen any features that would indicate they were either Gentoo or Magellanic.

Wandering Albatross. Recorded each day, though never more than two, from leaving the Falklands on 9 Feb, to 33.5°S 42.5°W (sea temp. 72°F), but on returning to the SW, apart from one on 15th at 33.3° S 44.2°W, none were seen until after sailing from Montevideo. (The ship did not sail there directly but via a position of 42.5°S 51.7°W - see map). After leaving Montevideo, none until 25th, when at least 47 were present in the vicinity of the trawlers (a further 30+ "great albatrosses" were also present in this gathering).

Royal Albatross. At least 21 (13 of the race *D.e. sandfordi*) on 25 Feb, whilst some of the 30+ "great" albatrosses may have been the southern, nominate race (*D.e. epomophora*). Four were in sight together during the afternoon of 18 Mar, in position 42.3°S 52.6°W; two were of the northern race.

Black-browed Albatross. None seen once clear of the Falklands during the period 9-19 Feb (arrival Montevideo), with the first two recorded pm. 23rd (after sailing from Montevideo), some 40nm east of Cape San Antonio. Small numbers on 24th along the 100 fathom line, with a huge gathering on 25th, estimated to be about 8,500. Of those seen sufficiently close to be aged, only about 3% were adults (cf. ages of birds around the Falklands - Part I).

Yellow-nosed Albatross ***Diomedea chlororhynchos***. Only recorded on two days. On the evening of 23 Feb off the mouth of the River Plate, over 450 counted in three hours from 1700, though of these 300+ were with five trawlers between 1900-1930. At least 75% of the birds aged were immatures; one immature on 17 March at 46.2°S 55.0°W.

Sooty Albatross ***Phoebetria fusca***. One record of a single bird on 10 Feb, at 47.3°S 53.8°W.

Prions sp. ***Pachyptila*** sp.. The only birds of this group recorded were c45 on 10 Feb at 46.7°S 53.2°W; c850 on 11th at 42.9°S 49.0°W and c40 on 18 March at 42.3°S 52.6°W. All were thought to be Broad-billed *P. vittata*.

Atlantic Petrel. The first was observed on the NE edge of the FICZ at approx.50.5°S 56.3°W pm on 9 Feb. Thereafter, seen daily until arrival Montevideo, usually in small numbers, but on both 16th and 17th up to 20

per hour were counted. Numbers increased further on 18th, when approaching the Continental Shelf, with 37 in 30 mins am., and 104 during one hour pm. At least 150 were also recorded pm. on 23rd, but thinly distributed on 24th, except for a raft of 250+ disturbed by the ship at 1930 at 43.0°S 59.6°W. 400+ amongst the gathering of birds with the fishing fleet on 25th. The most southerly bird recorded on the second voyage was at 49.9°S 56.7°W on 16 March. On 17th, 25 were counted in one hour at 45.3°S 54.0°W. On 18th, 40+ were recorded during each of three one-hourly counts, whilst 20+ were seen during two such counts on 19th.

Great-winged Petrel ***Pterodroma macroptera***. The sole record during either voyage was of one at 39.2°S 57.3°W on 24 Feb. This species rarely wanders this far west.

Kerguelen Petrel. One on 25 Feb, at 40.1°S 60.6°W, was the only record.

Soft-plumaged Petrel. Small numbers were recorded during the period 10-13 Feb, with the maximum recorded in one hour being eight; similarly, from 14-17th, but none thereafter. None were recorded 23-28th on passage Montevideo to Falklands. On the second trip, it was recorded only on 16, 17 and 18 March, again in small numbers.

White-chinned Petrel ***Procellaria aequinoctialis***. Very scarce during the first voyage, with a single on 11 Feb; five on 17th, and four on 18th, at about 40.2°S 53.0°W. Two of the last had the distinctive head pattern of the race *P.a. conspicillata*, breeding on Inaccessible Island, in the Tristan da Cunha group. 35 were counted off the mouth of the River Plate on 23rd, with small numbers on 24th, and 250+ in company with other birds on 25th, attending the fishing fleet.

Cory's Shearwater ***Calonectris diomedea***. Five pm. on 15 Feb at approx. 35.3°S 44.2°W. 65 were counted in one hour am. 16th at 39.0°S 47.8°W, with 31 over similar period pm. On 17th, numbers were smaller, with eight am. and four pm. However, as the vessel moved closer to the 100 fm. line on 18th, (see map) numbers again increased, with 31 in 30 mins am. and 64/hr pm. During this latter period, at 1915 local, three were seen (in posn. 38.6°N 53.5°W) to be slightly more compact, and appeared smaller than the others; plumage of these was similar to the others, except for the darker head and upper-parts, and black bill; it is considered that they belonged to the race *C.d. edwardsii*, which breeds on the Cape Verde Islands. This is thought to be the first record of this race from the western South Atlantic.

Strangely, on leaving the River Plate on 23 Feb, this species was not observed amongst the concentrations of birds recorded during the evening. Two were seen on 24th at 39.2°S 57.3°W; these were in pristine condition, obviously having recently completed their moult.

Great Shearwater. Daily, in small numbers, during the February voyage south of 35°S. Very large numbers were recorded pm. on 23rd, estimated at 7,500. Many of these were in heavy wing-moult, with at least primaries 4-7 or 4-8 missing and some scarcely able to take wing. Many showed heavy moult of the upper wing-coverts, much white being visible, and several tail-feathers missing, or partly grown. An estimated 4,500 in attendance with trawlers on 25th, many of these also showing heavy wing-moult. (None around the Falklands at this time showed any signs of wing-moult, and none were seen to be so until mid-April.)

On the second voyage north, only small numbers daily, with the exception of a raft of 150 at 0730 on 18 March at 42.8°S 42.8°W; again, many were in heavy wing-moult.

Sooty Shearwater. Apart from four pm. on 10 Feb, at 47.3°S 53.6°W, none were seen until pm. 23rd, off the River Plate, with c1,200 in 90 mins. 40 am. on 24th, and c850 with the fishing fleet on 25th. In contrast to the Great Shearwaters, none were observed in moult. There was a similar paucity of records during the March voyage.

Manx Shearwater ***Puffinus puffinus***. Four am. 18 Feb at 40.2°S 53.0°W, with numbers increasing afternoon and evening, when 77 were counted between 1830-1930; the ship was by then over the shallower water off the entrance to the River Plate. On sailing from Montevideo on 23rd, few were seen over the shelf, being well to the west of the 100 fm line, although 15 were seen with the trawlers that evening. Wing-moult was still evident on a few - primaries 2-3 not fully grown.

White-faced Storm-petrel ***Pelagodroma marina***. One was seen at 0915 on 11 Feb at 43.3°S 49.4°W, with five a little later the same day at 43.1°S 49.3°W; another on 16th at 39.4°S 48.3°W. These would all have been towards the known southern limit of their range (the type-specimen of this species being described from a location off the mouth of the River Plate).

White-bellied Storm-petrel ***Fregetta grallaria***. One was seen on 17 March at 46.1°S 54.9°W, and either the same bird, or a second one, five minutes later. Notes taken at the time stressed "no dark line along the centre of the belly; distinct white square rump; feet did not protrude beyond the tail; head, chin, throat and lower breast blackish/brown with clean, straight divide from lower breast, belly and vent. Again, clean, straight divide from blackish/brown undertail coverts and tail. Underwings broadly dark along the leading and trailing edges; outer primaries; centre of underwing white - all divides between black and white having the same clean edge as the belly - no sign of moult."

Falkland (Great) Skua. The only birds seen were some 35, with the fishing fleet on 25 Feb, at 45°S 60°W approx.

Chilean Skua ***C.s. chilensis***. A single on 24 Feb showed the overall build and structure of the above, but had a pale face, dark cap, dark upper-parts; tawny to mahogany under-body and wing-coverts/axilliaries. Three birds seen with other skuas on 25th showed similar features, and were attributed to this race.

Arctic Skua ***Stercorarius parasiticus***. Recorded on three days, with nine on 18 Feb, two on 24th, and at least 12 on 25th (associated with fishing vessels).

Long-tailed Skua ***Stercorarius longicaudus***. Noted on 11 occasions (during the two excursions). On the most easterly track, only small numbers were recorded, and always singly - all were adults with no sign of moult. However, when further west on 18 Feb, far larger daily counts were recorded, with several parties of up to ten birds, comprising mainly adults, but a few immatures; all were in quite heavy wing-moult. On 22nd, whilst still over the Continental Shelf, some 30nm off the River Plate, a congregation of about 72 was encountered near several fishing boats. Despite their obvious attraction to them, none were seen actively scavenging. Of these 72, less than half were adults, with some of the immatures being in active wing-moult (primaries 5-7 missing). The 18 observed on 23rd consisted of two loose parties, of 13 and five, all flying steadily northwards at a high level; of these, at least seven were adults. On 25th,

a veritable armada of trawlers was encountered, straddling the 100 fm line, within 20nm around 45.1°S 60.2°W, which attracted a very large concentration of seabirds. At least 175 Long-tails were counted, with undoubtedly many more in attendance of the more distant vessels. Of those aged, some 65% were immatures.

The second trip north to 42.3°S 52.6°W (approx) produced birds on three days: 41 on 17 March, 87 on 18th and 16 on 19th. Those on 17th were mainly in small parties of 1-5, though a loose flock of 17 was observed pm., all of which were adults. Of the 87 on 18th, all but five were seen in a spell from 1600-1830; 33 were flushed off the sea by the approach of the ship, all of which were adults, whereas 43 seen later were flying NW in one long spread-out line - at least 37 of these were adults. The 16 recorded on 19th were again all adults, but in ones and twos throughout the day. Not a single adult was seen with long tail-streamers.

Cattle Egret. One was first seen aboard at 0915 on 18 March at 42.3°S 52.6°W, and was present until late pm., when it was seen departing high to the NE.

Part III - Voyages to South Georgia.

Three trips were made to the island, twice to resupply the garrison at Christmas, and again in early April, also to take off an injured person, in mid-March. There were only two records of note:

Four **Grey Petrels** ***Procellaria cinerea*** were recorded some 6nm north of Bird Island on 7 April, and constitute the first record of this species in South Georgian waters.

On 1 April, an **Eared Dove** ***Zenaida auriculata*** was seen aboard the vessel when some 270nm to the east of the Falklands. It was present all the following day and was last seen at 1215 on 3rd, when about 10nm north of the Bay of Isles. Although ship-assisted, this is the first record of this species for South Georgia.

The only other comment concerning the birds of this area is of the apparent decrease in numbers of all seabirds seen off the coasts of the island and the open ocean between here and the Falklands. For the Wandering Albatross this is confirmed by the drop in numbers at the breeding colonies on the island, and the number of ringed birds dying as a result of the long-line fishing industry (see Croxall *et al* 1990). For the other species, I trust and hope it is only an illusion, and cannot be substantiated.

Part IV - Falkland Islands to Barbados - 15 May to 1 June.

RFA *Grey Rover* departed from the Falklands pm. on 15 May, in thick fog, arriving Barbados am. on 1 June. The passage was, on the whole, uneventful, the highlight being a **Soft-plumaged Petrel** to the SE of Trinidad (see below).

Wandering Albatross. None until 17th, at 44.0°S 51.7°W, then daily to 25.7°S 42.3°W on 21st, when the sea temperature was 72°F. Never more than two were seen on any day, with no adults recorded.

Black-browed Albatross. Small numbers were seen daily until 21st - all adults.

Grey-headed Albatross. Only two were recorded, when about 250nm NE

of Falklands.

Yellow-nosed Albatross. One adult on 21st at 25.8°S 42.3°W, and a second on 22nd at 21.7°S 40.1°W.

Sooty Albatross. One adult at 48.4°S 54.4°W on 16th, then two or three on both 17th (44.0°S 51.6°W) and 18th (39.5°S 49.5°W).

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross ***Phoebetria palpebrata***. Two on 16th, when within 200nm of the Falklands.

Pintado Petrel. Daily, in small numbers from leaving Falklands until 21st (25.6°S 42.3°W).

Soft-plumaged Petrel. Seen daily from the Falklands, with up to four per hourly count, until 21st. But one passed within 750yds of the ship late pm. 31 March, at 11.4°N 57.1°W. It had no breast band (only faint shoulder "smudges") whilst the head showed quite dark around the eye and crown, suggesting possibly the race (or species) breeding on the Cape Verde Islands, **Fea's Petrel/Gon-gon** ***P.feae***.

Cory's Shearwater. Two on 19th at 34.7°S 47.5°W were still well south, and may be part of a small number which possibly remain in that area during the northern summer. Three on 24th (12.3°S 35.9°W), and one on 25th, off Recife.

Great Shearwater. None until 17th at 44.0°SD 51.8°W, then ever-present, though always less than ten, until 24th (12.3°S 35.9°W) when birds following the ship all day; 35+ recorded. Ten on 25th off Recife, and one on 26th at 04.1°S 36.9°W, then no more until a single on 31st at 11.0°N 56.9°W. It would appear that once the birds round the extreme eastern part of South America, near Recife, they fly directly towards the Grand Banks.

Leach's Storm-petrel ***Oceanodroma leucorhoa***. One on 29th at 04.6°N 48.6°W.

Long-tailed Skua. One on 29th at 04.6°N 48.6°W.

Cattle Egret. One, first during early on 17th at 44.6°S 49.9°W, remained aboard until 20th (30.5°S 44.0°W) when it was seen to depart high to the NW at 1215. It arrived when the ship was some 400nm from the nearest land, departing when at least 200nm from land, having travelled with the ship some 1,000nm NW.

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A SEABIRD LOG AROUND THE WORLD IN THE 1960s

by D. J. Slinn

Thirty years ago it was still possible to cross the world's oceans on a regularly scheduled passenger ship. This account is of a voyage out to New Zealand in 1962, via the Panama Canal, and returning to the UK, through Suez, in 1964.

Daily observations were made when at sea, averaging 3-4 hours each day, including quantitative counts in units of 15 minutes, as far as possible spaced out during the day. Observations were made from the ship's quarter, with the light behind, using 6x30 binoculars and Alexander's *Birds of the Ocean* as an aid to identification. Overall numbers of seabirds, expressed as birds per hour during each day at sea, are presented in Fig. 1.

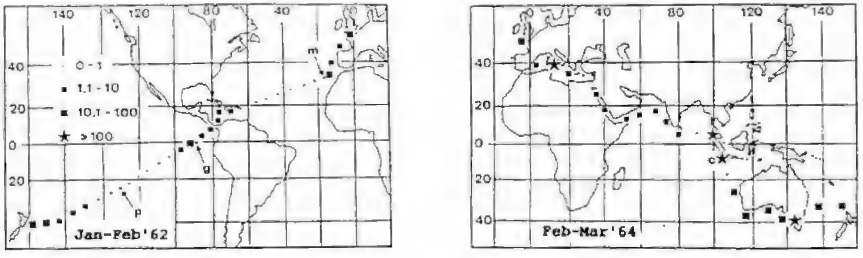

Figure 1. Noon position and numbers of seabirds (expressed as birds per hour). Island groups mentioned in the text are denoted by : m (Madeira), g (Galapagos), p (Pitcairn) and c (Christmas Is.).

The outward journey was made aboard the MV *Rangitata* of the New Zealand Shipping Company, leaving London Docks in the early afternoon of 12 Jan'62; the only seabirds present were few Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*. Next day, in a storm-swept Channel, the ship was accompanied by a cloud of gulls, the majority being Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* with smaller numbers of Great and Lesser Black-backed (LBB) Gulls *L. marinus* and *L. fuscus* respectively, and Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*. During the next three days, numbers declined: Herring Gulls were absent and a few LBB Gulls were seen on 14 Jan only. Kittiwakes, however, were always present together with Great Skuas *Catharacta skua* and the occasional Northern Gannet *Morus bassana*.

Madeira was reached on 16 Jan and, with Porto Santo visible on the starboard bow in the early afternoon, numbers of Herring Gulls started to appear. Most were adults and of the race *atlantis*, with a fairly dark grey mantle and yellow legs. The adults had white heads, whereas those seen in the Channel mostly were still in winter plumage.

Birds became very sparse indeed after leaving Madeira, and the next few days brought only occasional Kittiwakes, the last of which (a single adult) was seen on 20 Jan. The first flying fish appeared on this day and the following two days, although birdless, were notable for the clumps of Sargassum weed floating at the surface of the sea. The morning watch of 23 Jan was enlivened by the appearance of three White-tailed Tropicbirds *Phaethon lepturus*, one of which took a flying-fish from the bow wave of the ship.

The ship entered the Caribbean on 25 Jan and, as it was never far from

land, birds were seen during every watch. These included Pomarine Skuas *S. pomarinus* and occasional Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster*. A small-medium sized shearwater, in groups of up to 30, was at the time identified as the Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*, but was more likely to have been the closely related Audubon's Shearwater *P. lherminieri* (Alexander did not separate them in the first edition of his book). Following a call at Kingston on 26 Jan, bird numbers dropped but Pomarine Skuas were again dominant, together with Brown Boobies.

Transit of the Panama Canal was made on 29 Jan, and the following day brought a few more Pomarine Skuas, Brown Boobies and, at night, a stranded probable Audubon's Shearwater; occasional shearwaters seen during the next two days may have been of the latter species. The ship passed to the north of the Galapagos Islands during the very early hours of 1 Feb but was, nevertheless, not too far off for a number of birds associated with the group to be recorded during the morning, including Masked Boobies *Sula dactylatra*, two Swallow-tailed Gulls *Larus furcatus* and a single Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*. During the following two nights, single storm-petrels, both identified as Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, came aboard, and small numbers of a similar storm-petrel seen during the daytime were thought to have been this species. The next few days were virtually birdless, apart from occasional sightings of tropicbirds, one or two of which came close enough to be identified as Red-billed.

On 8 Feb, the ship made a brief call at Pitcairn Island, anchoring off in severe weather conditions. Brown Noddies *Anous stolidus* were common along with a few White Terns *Gygis alba*, Masked Boobies and a single frigatebird, presumably *Fregata minor*. Nothing was seen after leaving Pitcairn but seawater temperatures fell from 26.7°C recorded off the Island, to 21.1°C on 11 Feb, and 18.3°C on 13th. From late on 11th *procellariidae* became evident - two species of shearwater were quite common, one an all dark bird and the other much smaller, dark above and light below but with a well defined dark band on both leading and trailing edge of the wing; these were thought to be the Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* and the Little Shearwater, respectively. Wandering Albatrosses *Diomedea exulans* were seen from 12 Feb onwards and, finally, as the New Zealand coast was approached, Giant Petrel *Macronectes* sp. and Pintado Petrels *Daption capense*. In Wellington Harbour on 17 Feb, seabirds were represented by an abundance of Dominican Gulls *Larus dominicanus* and rather fewer Silver Gulls *L. novaehollandiae*, together with Giant Petrels and Wandering Albatrosses.

Homeward journey. Almost two years later, the return journey was made aboard the P & O *Arcadia* leaving Auckland during the late afternoon of 5 Feb' 64. Once again the dominant seabird was the Dominican Gull together with a few Silver Gulls. Crossing the Tasman Sea, sightings were made of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, prions *Pachyptila* sp., a few Australasian Gannets *Morus serrator* and two single Red-tailed Tropicbirds *Phaeton rubricauda*. On the approach to Sydney, on 8 Feb, the ship was joined by large numbers of Silver Gulls but Dominican Gulls were absent; indeed none of the latter species was seen during progress around the south of the continent.

After three days in Sydney, calls were made at Melbourne (13 Feb), Adelaide (15th), and Fremantle (18th). The Bass Strait was notable for the huge rafts of

hundreds (if not thousands!) of Short-tailed Shearwaters *Puffinus tenuirostris*. In the course of the passage round the SE coast of Australia, seabirds were always abundant and included: Pomarine, Antarctic *Catharacta antarctica* and Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus*; the latter were predominant, mainly dark phase, and seen harrying terns and Silver Gulls; also albatrosses (almost all White-capped *Diomedea cauta* and a few Yellow-nosed *D. chlororhynchos*), Giant Petrels, Australasian Gannets, Crested Terns *Sterna bergii* and occasional Pacific Gulls *L. pacificus*. Once out into the Great Australian Bight, however, sightings were mainly of the Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*, large numbers of which passed the ship on all days. A few flying fish were seen on the day before arrival in Fremantle and, with the approach of land, Silver Gulls and Crested Terns made their appearance accompanied by Arctic and Pomarine Skuas. Numbers of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters occurred during the first day out of Fremantle, but nothing was seen next day until sunset when two frigatebirds appeared. One of these, was all-black ventrally, and was tentatively considered to be a male Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*. At this time the nearest land was Christmas Island, well over 300 miles away, and presumably the 'home base' of the frigate birds.

Christmas Island was passed at about noon on 21 Feb, and provided a truly memorable spectacle. Small numbers of seabirds had been seen since early morning, at first mostly Red-footed Boobies *Sula sula* with the occasional Brown Booby. Then, about mid-morning, came the first sighting of the beautiful golden-hued race of the White-tailed Tropicbird. The island was passed during a tropical downpour which restricted observation, but in any event seabirds were too numerous to be counted accurately. Nevertheless, there must have been several hundred frigatebirds soaring up from the island; boobies were also very common, mainly Red-footed and rather fewer Browns, but there was no definite sighting of Abbot's Booby *Sula abbotti*. White-tailed Tropicbirds were perhaps the next most numerous with much smaller numbers of the Red-tailed species. Brown Noddies were seen only in the vicinity of the island itself.

Once away from the island, bird numbers fell away dramatically. But Red-footed Boobies, Brown Boobies and White-tailed Tropicbirds continued to be seen in small numbers well into the afternoon, the last sighting being of a group of twelve feeding Red-footed Boobies harried by a couple of frigatebirds; the ship must then have been some 100 miles from Christmas Island. It was the end of an eventful day marred only by the comment of a fellow passenger as we passed Christmas Island: "What good are they? Can you eat them or are they just trash?"

After a day in Singapore (23 Feb) large flocks of feeding terns were seen in the Straits of Malacca but they were never close enough to permit an attempt at identification. From then on only occasional Brown Boobies were seen until we were well up the western coast of India, when numbers of Brown-headed Gulls *Larus brunnicephalus* appeared. Approaching Bombay (28 Feb), two other species of gull were in evidence, the most common of which was the Black-headed Gull (most in winter plumage). The other gull of interest was a dark mantled yellow-legged Herring Gull (the mantle perhaps a little lighter than in *L. fuscus graellsii*) which was taken to be *L. a. heuglini*.

The first day out into the Arabian Sea brought sightings of Red-billed Tropicbirds, usually in ones and twos, and on the second day small numbers of

Masked Boobies. Some medium sized all-dark shearwaters were seen the day before reaching Aden. In retrospect, I decided that, with their rapid wing beat and jinking flight, they may well have been Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*.

At Aden (3 Mar), Sooty Gulls *Larus hemprichii* were common along with Black-headed Gulls (mostly still in winter plumage), dark mantled Herring Gulls *L. a. heuglini* and the Scandinavian race of the Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. f. fuscus*, the bright yellow legs of the latter being readily separable from the rather dull yellow legs of the Herring Gulls. Sooty Gulls and LBB Gulls were seen for much of the first day into the Red Sea but thereafter only occasional LBBs and unidentified terns occurred until the ship entered the Gulf of Suez; here were recorded: yellow-legged but light mantled Herring Gulls *L.a.cachinnans*, a few LBB Gulls and two White-eyed Gulls *Larus leucophthalmus*.

Following the transect of the Suez Canal on 6 Mar, calls were made at Piraeus (8th), Marseilles (11th) and Gibraltar (13th). Little was seen in the eastern Mediterranean apart from LBB Gulls, Yellow-legged Herring Gulls and, near land, Black-headed Gulls and the occasional Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus*. Once into the Tyrrhenian Sea, however, large numbers of what were presumably Yelkouan Shearwaters *Puffinus yelkouan* appeared, as well as some Northern Gannets. More Northern Gannets were seen between Marseilles and Gibraltar but yellow-legged, light mantled, Herring Gulls (here likely to be *L. a. michahellis*) were dominant in this part of the western Mediterranean. On the final homeward leg LBB Gulls, Northern Gannets and Great Skuas were the species recorded. Once into the Channel, Herring Gulls and GBB Gulls accompanied the ship. We docked at Tilbury on 16 Mar'64, once again in the company of Black-headed Gulls which were now in summer plumage.

COMMENT. Elementary quantification of the counts brings out the very low incidence of seabirds in the open ocean as compared with coastal and other areas of high productivity. Exceptional numbers of seabirds were seen in the vicinity of well known breeding localities such as Bass Strait (Short-tailed Shearwaters) and Christmas Island, as well as in the Straits of Malacca (feeding terns) and the Tyrrhenian Sea. In the latter locality, Yelkouan Shearwaters made up the bulk of the numbers in what may have been a definite movement as the birds were all moving in a generally westerly direction. Other points of interest include firstly, sighting of an immature and an adult Kittiwake in the subtropical mid-Atlantic at 28.8°N 26.0°W and 26.9°N 36.1°W respectively and, secondly, frigatebirds at considerable distances from the nearest land (Christmas Island) at dusk; this suggests that some may pass the night on the wing.

Thanks are due to both ships' companies for providing daily sea surface temperatures and the noon positions, and also to Mr. R. G. Sibson, the New Zealand ornithologist, for helpful discussion regarding the identity of procellariiform birds seen on the homeward journey.

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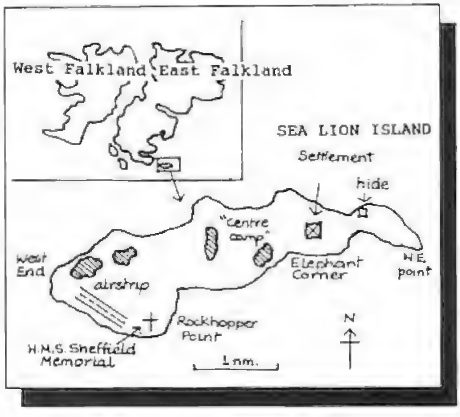
A VISIT TO SEA LION ISLAND, FALKLANDS, 19-21 FEBRUARY 1994.

by Leading Hand (Comms) A.H. Todd, RFA

Introduction. During a recent appointment to RFA *Diligence* in the Falkland Islands, between November 1993 and May 1994, I was fortunate enough to be able to spend a weekend birdwatching on Sea Lion Island from 19-21 February. Sea Lion Island is situated to the south of East Falkland, the nearest landfall being Bull point, some eight miles distant (see Map). The island itself is some five miles long, one mile wide, comprising mostly grazing land, with a number of areas of dense almost impenetrable Tussac Grass. Several freshwater ponds are scattered about, and the coastline is divided between stretches of low sheer cliffs and both sandy and rocky beaches. Having arrived on the island by light aircraft, and settled into the very comfortable lodge, I commenced my two-day exploration of the island.



Observations. A short distance to the east of the settlement was a large colony of several thousand **Gentoo Penguins *Pygoscelis papua*** with well-grown chicks. In the midst of this mass of Gentoos was a solitary pair of **King Penguins *Aptenodytes patagonicus***, whilst around the periphery of the colony were **Dolphin Gulls *Larus scoresbii***, **Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus*** and **Antarctic Skuas *Catharacta antarctica***. The surrounding grazing land was pitted with **Magellanic Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus*** burrows, as was much of the rest of the island, but during my visit only a few Magellanic Penguins were seen.

On the nearby beach, a hide had been erected overlooking at least five **Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus*** nests, each containing a large downy chick. Adult Giant Petrels were feeding three of the chicks on 20th, the young birds being seen to stimulate their parents to regurgitate food by constant bill-tapping. Other species present on this stretch of beach included **Flightless Steamer Duck *Tachyeres brachydactyla***, **Crested Duck *Lophonetta specularoides***, **Magellanic Oystercatcher *Haematopus leucopodus***, **Blackish Oystercatcher *H. ater***, **Two-banded Plover *Charadrius falklandicus***, **White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis***, **Kelp Goose *Chloephaga hybrida***, and **30+ Brown-hooded Gulls *Larus maculipennis***. Offshore could be seen large numbers of **Black-browed Albatrosses *Diomedea melanophris***.

Moving SW along the coast, one comes to the aptly named Elephant Corner, where at least 80 bull Elephant Seals *Mirounga leonina* were hauled out on the beach in various stages of moult. I spent a few hours daily at this spot watching the seals squabbling amongst themselves. On a number of occasions, from a safe vantage point, I watched as violent fights broke out between pairs of seals, the antagonists coming together with shuddering

collisions, biting and snapping, and drawing blood on most of these occasions. On this beach, but well clear of the seals, 97 Magellanic Oystercatchers were present on 20th.

Several hundred metres SW of Elephant Corner, and slightly inland, lies a fairly small freshwater pond surrounded by tall tussac grass. This pond held the following on day one: 25 Crested Ducks, 10 **Chiloe Wigeon** ***Anas sibilatrix***, six **Speckled Teal** ***A. flavirostris***. six Flightless Steamer Ducks, two Magellanic Pengions (one adult, one juvenile), and five **Silvery Grebes** ***Podiceps occipitalis*** (three adults, two chicks). Stalking around the edges of the pond were three adult and two immature **Black-crowned Night herons** ***Nycticorax nycticorax***. The coastline between Elephant Corner and Rockhopper Point is mostly narrow stony beaches backed by steep low cliffs. At the base of one of these were at least 54 Southern Sea Lions *Otaria flavescens* - 10 bulls, 24 cows, and 18 pups. The cliffs in the vicinity of Rockhopper Point and the HMS *Sheffield* memorial are slightly higher, and plunge straight into the sea (vertigo suffers beware!). Hundreds of **Rock Shags** ***Phalacrocorax magellanicus*** and several thousand **Imperial Shags** ***P. atriceps*** nest on the tops and sides of these cliffs. **Rockhopper Penguins** ***Eudyptes chrysocome*** mingle with the Imperial Shags, and one can only marvel at their ability to scale these sheer rock walls. At least 41, probably more, **Yellow-billed Sheathbill** ***Chionis alba*** were scavenging anything remotely edible amongst the shags and penguins.

Immediately inland from Rockhopper Point is a large expanse of tussac grass, in the midst of which I flushed at least seven **Common Snipe** ***Gallinago gallinago***, and heard several Magellanic Penguins braying, the latter living up to their name of "jackass". Further inland, at Centre Camp, not a great number of species were to be seen: **Upland Geese** ***Chloephaga picta*** and **Ruddy-headed Geese** ***C. rubidiceps***. However, whilst crossing this area on the evening of 19th, I observed a group of up to 70 **Rufous-chested Dotterels** ***Charadrius modestus***. (COMMENT. Robin Woods *in litt* suggests these could well have been a pre-migration flock).

Sea Lion Island has a healthy population of raptors, one of the reasons which brought me to this particular island. **Turkey Vultures** ***Cathartes aura***, as throughout the Falkland Islands, were to be seen frequently, with at least ten different individuals in the area of the settlement alone, and numerous others seen across the island during the two days. Extremely tame **Striated Caracaras** ***Phalcoboenus australis*** were encountered on a number of occasions, with at least six different adults and two different immatures recorded. At Elephant Corner, one of the immatures, much to my surprise, took pieces of tuna sandwich from my out-stretched hand! The **Crested Caracara** ***Caracara plancus*** also occurs on the island, but none were seen during my visit. The local race of **Peregrine** ***Falco peregrinus cassini*** was observed on at least four occasions, mostly in the area of Rockhopper Point, where I saw one individual carrying prey. The unfortunate victim appeared to be a **Falkland Thrush** ***Turdus falcklandii***. A fourth species of raptor, **Red-backed Hawk** ***Buteo polyosoma***, was recorded on the second afternoon, a single bird hovering in the vicinity of the beach hide.

Five species of small passerine were seen during the two days. By far the commonest were the very tame **Tussac-birds** ***Cinclodes antarcticus***, which

occur all over the island, and which, if an observer remains still, will actually walk over his boots. As with the immature Striated Caracara, I was also able to hand-feed this species. Black-throated Finch ***Melanodera melanodera***, Falkland Thrush, and House Wren ***Troglodytes aedon cobbi*** were also recorded in good numbers, with Black-chinned Siskin ***Carduelis barbatus*** being observed on one occasion.

Conclusion. I very much enjoyed my short visit to Sea Lion Island, and wished I could have stayed longer. Sea Lion Lodge was an extremely comfortable operational base, the food was excellent, and I was given a warm welcome by the hosts, David and Pat Gray. If I am appointed to another Falklands-based ship in the future, I will certainly consider returning to this island, and its fascinating wildlife.

How to get there. RN and RFA personnel can book accomodation and flights through the travel centre at No. 12 Facility RAF Mount Pleasant, Tel: 6691.

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CAMBODIA - THE LAST REFUGE FOR RARE AND ENDANGERED WATERFOWL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

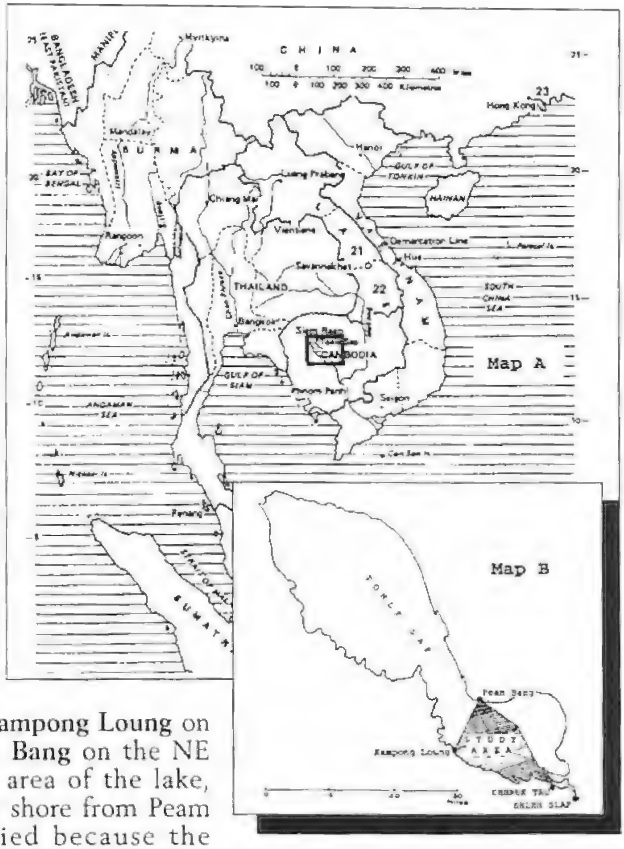
by Sergeant Peter Carr, Royal Marines

INTRODUCTION. The war-torn country of Cambodia was placed in the world spotlight in 1992, due to the United Nations establishing there the most expensive and ambitious UN mission to date. The aim was to conduct free and fair elections to help bring peace and stability to this troubled nation.

The effect that years of strife has had on the country and its wildlife has been marked - for the latter, all has not been detrimental. Unlike two of its three neighbouring countries, Vietnam and Thailand, Cambodia has not experienced a population explosion, and the accompanying problems of land reclamation, for human use. This has meant that certain species of birds, especially large waterfowl which require undisturbed areas for breeding, have fared better there than in other areas of SE Asia. The **Tonle Sap (Great Lake)** (centred on 13°N 104°E), is a dominant topographical feature of Cambodia, and a prime example of this relatively undisturbed habitat. (See Map A).

From 7 April to 27 October 1993, I served as a UN Military Observer in Cambodia. From 9 April to 16 June I lived and worked on a floating village called **Chhnuk Tru**, which is situated on the Tonle Sap River, in the SE reaches of the Tonle Sap Lake (see Map B). The daily routine for Observers here was to rise at dawn with the local population, and commence patrolling by small inflatable craft to the accessible areas of the surrounding river systems, and the Tonle Sap Lake itself. This presented a unique opportunity to study the avifauna of an extremely rich and under-researched area. Observing

the local birds whilst on patrol as a Military Observer presented some unique problems; after decades of internal strife, the availablity and subsequent ownership of assorted weapons amongst the local population, the armies of the political factions, paramilitary police forces, and village militias, meant that we had to err on the side of caution when moving within the area. This did severely limit our observations on several occasions.



The study area. (See Map B shaded area). This ranged from Sheh Slap on the Tonle Sap River, 4km SE of Chhnuk Tru, then followed the river up through all the accessible and non-hostile waterways, to the lake itself.

Observations were made on the lake as far north as an imaginary line drawn across the water from **Kampong Loung** on the SW shore, to **Peam Bang** on the NE shore. The unenclosed area of the lake, extending east along the shore from Peam Bang, was NOT studied because the Khmer Rouge were known to operate there.

RESULTS. During the four months I spent on the Tonle Sap I recorded 101 species of birds, within the study area. These ranged from pelicans, through vultures to mynahs and weavers. Some of the species feeding and breeding here constitute internationally important populations. Throughout SE Asia, vast tracts of wetland habitat have been drained, due to the pressures inherent in a population explosion, with the result that several species of large waterfowl have declined dramatically in numbers. Some are now Red Data Book species, for example:

Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*. This was noted daily in small numbers throughout the study area, once the water level rose. A survey conducted by the Crane Foundation/Thai Royal Forest Dept, in 1992. observed a concentration of 1,000+ in swamp forest on the southern border of the lake.

Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilus javanicus* and **Greater Adjutant *L. dubious***

were both observed within the area. The latter being the world's most endangered stork.

Other rare or endangered SE Asian species I observed were **Milky Stork** ***Mycteria leucophala***, Black-headed Ibis ***Threskiornis melanocephalus*** and **Glossy Ibis** ***Plegadis falcinellus***.

But it was not just the large waterfowl which made Tonle Sap so impressive. The waders using the exposed mud as a fuelling stop, whilst on migration, were uncountable due to the vastness of available feeding area. I recorded 17 species of wader, using binoculars, but never leaving my craft. The potential species list, given time and a telescope, is far larger. The size of the flocks is also sometimes an awesome spectacle, with clouds of 1,000+ **Red-necked Stint** ***Calidris ruficollis*** mixed with **Curlew Sandpiper** ***Calidris ferruginea*** not uncommon.

Sights which remain etched in my memory are waking one morning to see 4,000+ **Whiskered Tern** ***Chlidonias hybrida*** hawking around our houseboat, prior to migration; also lines of migrating **Indian Shag** ***Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*** passing overhead in their hundreds, as the sun set. Other seabird species recorded were:

Brown-headed Gull ***Larus brunnicephalus***, a migrant, seen infrequently in very small numbers in April and May, far out in the deeper areas of the lake.

White-winged Tern ***Chlidonias leucopterus***. Vagrant. A single summer-plumaged bird was seen feeding amongst ten Whiskered terns on 21 May - possibly the first record for Cambodia.

Caspian Tern ***Hydroprogne caspia***. Migrant. Small numbers seen infrequently, over the deeper areas of the lake, in April and May.

River Tern ***Sterna aurantia***. A single was noted on the same stretch of back-water on 9 and 10 June.

CONCLUSION. World organisations are now beginning to recognise the Tonle Sap as an internationally important site for birds, and steps are now being taken to protect at least part of it by declaring it a World Heritage Site. It is imperative that these measures are implemented, sooner rather than later, to protect the rare and endangered species still found there. These could possibly form the nucleus of a breeding stock from which a species could expand into other protected areas in southern Asia.

I have the honour to be returning to Cambodia and the Tonle Sap as a member of a two-man team sponsored by International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Asian Wetland Bureau, whose aim is to conduct detailed surveys of breeding populations of large waterfowl throughout Cambodia. This study will take place in March and April 1994.

A full species list is being submitted to the Oriental Bird Club, for possible inclusion in their bulletin, or in *Forktail*.

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THE MARSDEN SQUARE REPORTING GRID

by Commander M.K. Barritt, RN

In 1795, two distinguished servants of the East India Company took up posts with the Admiralty. Alexander Dalrymple became the first Hydrographer of the Navy. William Marsden, a Fellow of the Royal Society who had made his reputation with the first detailed account of Sumatra, was appointed Second Secretary, rising to First Secretary to the Admiralty before his retirement in 1807. He turned his attention to the need for an organised means of collating observations from sea, and devised a system of dividing the ocean into "squares" (Deacon 1971).

This initiative was driven by the need to supplement the meteorological data from fixed stations on land. Nowadays, Marsden's grid is principally used to correlate oceanographic data. The Hydrographic Office uses 1° Marsden Squares to record bathythermograph and conductivity/temperature/depth (CTD) probe data. Whilst other grids have been developed subsequently (e.g. by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)), which may lend themselves to specific localities, the Marsden grid has particular merit for world-wide data-gathering organisations such as RNBWS.

The 10° grid is shown on the chartlet, which is a reproduction of one of the C6383 series published by Hydrographer of the Navy. Use of Gall's Stereographic Projection enables depiction of the grid to be extended into the polar regions. The second diagram (p41)illustrates the system for numbering in 1° divisions. Barritt (1992) has shown how the grid can be sub-divided into 5° squares, using quadrant suffixes e.g. 001NE. Thus the grid has considerable flexibility, both for recording and subsequent analysis.

There is an added important advantage for RN vessels. The nature of their operations may make the positional information relating to passage observations classified. Important scientific records can thus be with-held from open data-banks. If sequential recording is avoided by amalgamating observations by Marsden Square, it may be possible to mask the pattern of ship activity. The sensitivity of the record can be further reduced by recording position only to the nearest degree of latitude and longitude, and, if necessary, by reporting only the name of the observer and not the name of the observing platform. Except perhaps in coastal waters, recording to the nearest degree should be quite satisfactory for observations of highly mobile phenomena such as birds.

In summary, it is proposed that RNBWS members should be encouraged to submit their records on RNBWS Seabird Census Sheets, labelled by Marsden Square, and that analyses and studies published by RNBWS should use 10°, 5°. or 1° Marsden grids, as appropriate.

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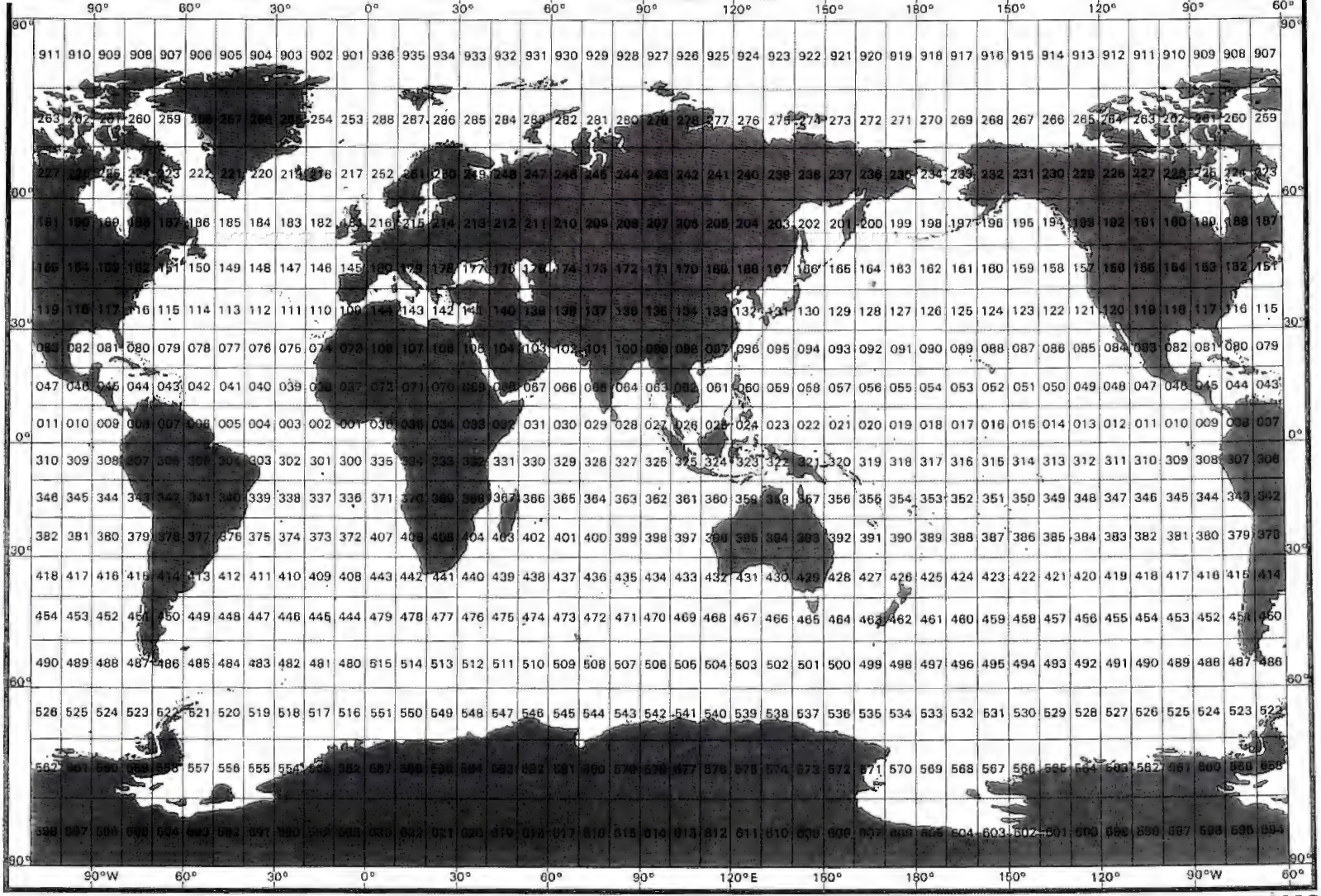

Published at Taunton 5th October 1990 under the Superintendence of Rear Admiral J. A. L. Myres, FRICS, Hydrographer of the Navy.

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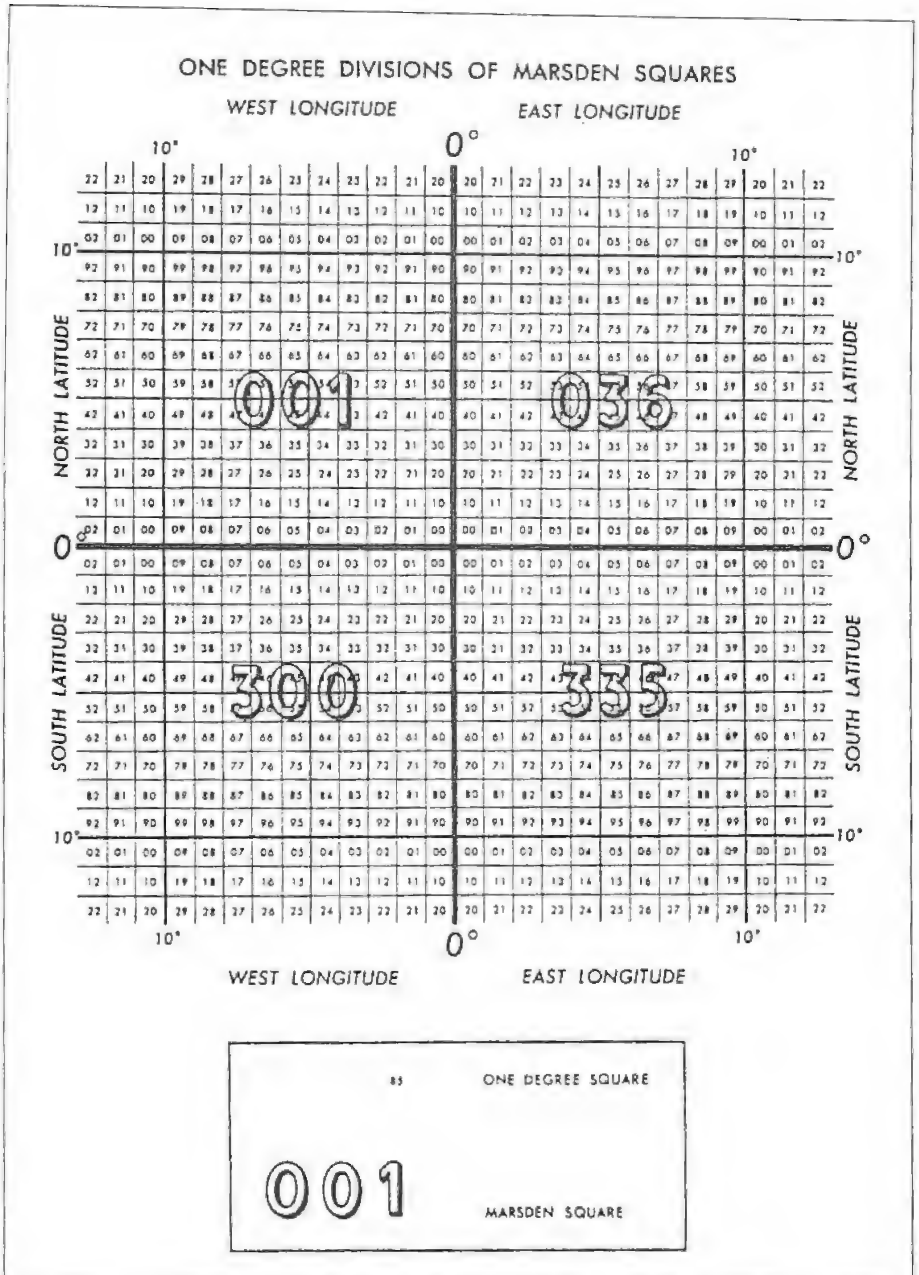
ONE DEGREE DIVISIONS OF MARSDEN SQUARES
WEST LONGITUDE
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10°
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NORTH LATITUDE
SOUTH LATITUDE
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300
335
WEST LONGITUDE
EAST LONGITUDE
85
ONE DEGREE SQUARE
001
MARSDEN SQUARE

EXPEDITION CRUISE TO FRANZ JOSEF LAND, HIGH ARCTIC, 16 - 29 July, 1993

by Beau W. Rowlands

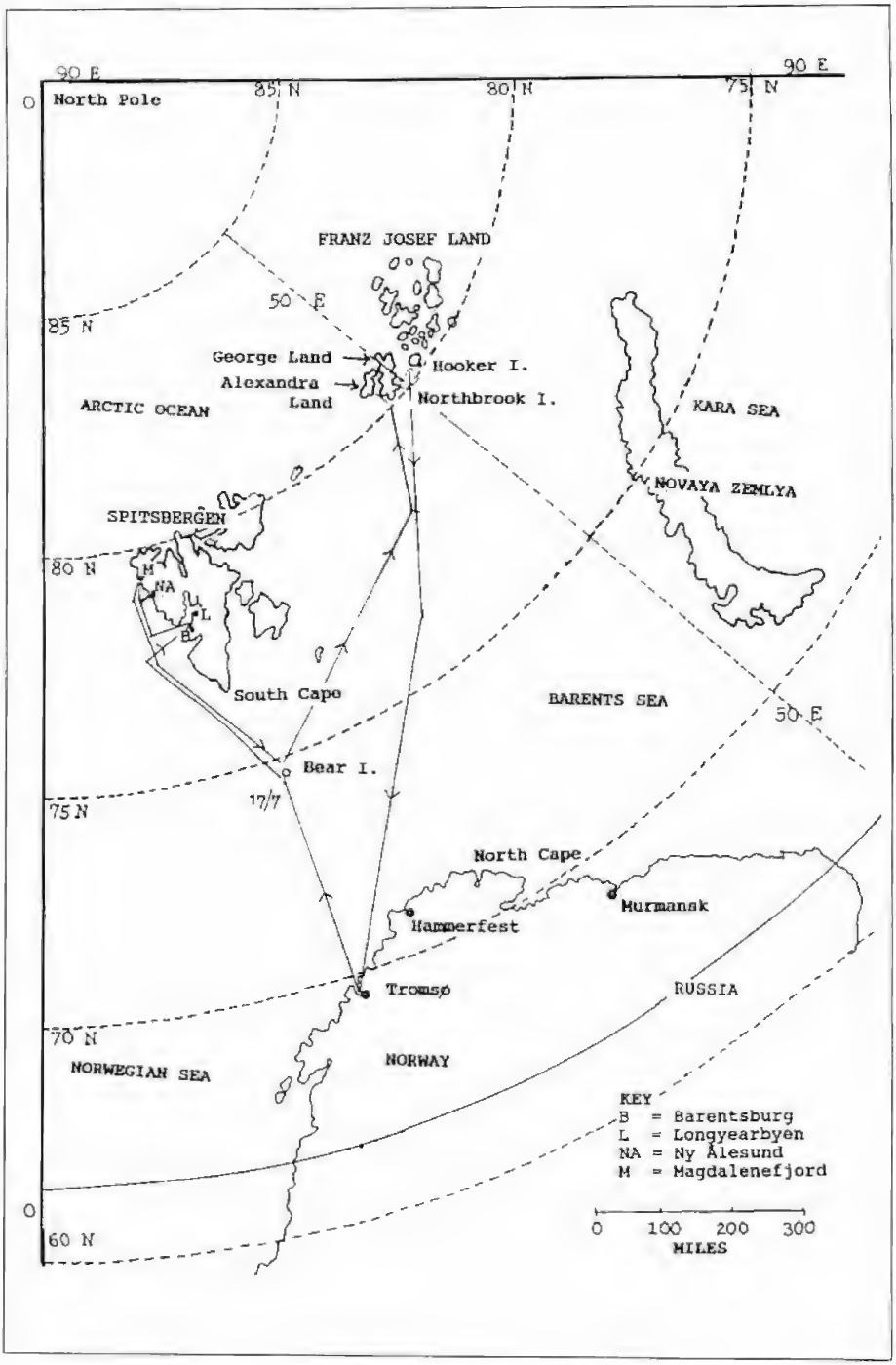
Introduction. On 17 July 1993, the Russian vessel *Klavdiya Yelanskaya* sailed from Tromsø on a 2,820nm Arctic expedition cruise. This was arranged by the National Trust for Scotland, in conjunction with Noble Caledonia. Our destination was Franz Josef Land, via Bear Island and Spitsbergen, and we returned to Tromsø on 29 July. The cost, as expedition cruises go, was substantial. Although our ship was designed for ice conditions, we needed an icebreaker, as escort, in the vicinity of Franz Josef Land. This carried a helicopter without which our four landings in Franz Josef Land would have been impossible. The majority of the 87 passengers were retired; the cruise lecturers included Shetlands ornithologist Bobby Tulloch, and he and I were the only really active birders on board. Although no unusual seabirds were sighted, the trip provided a superb opportunity to see the birds in these particularly remote waters, and to correlate observations with climatic and navigational data obtained from the bridge.

Franz Josef Land was discovered only in 1873, by Austrians Julius von Payer and Karl Weyprecht, in the *Admiral Tegetthoff*, and they named the group after the Austro-Hungarian Emperor. Lying between 79.75°N and 81.85°N, and 42.16°E and 65.05°E, the archipelago is the northernmost land in Europe and the eastern hemisphere, and only 800-1000 people have set foot there. Formerly a vast table-land, Franz Josef Land is made up of some 191 islands, islets and stacks, with 85% of the plateau surface (mainly of basaltic lava) perpetually covered by ice. The islands were formed by faulting, followed by glaciation, and there are postglacial raised beaches. The highest elevation (609m) is to the east, on Wilczek Land. Prior to Soviet annexation in 1926, the islands served as a base for attempts to reach the North Pole. Following a visit to Hooker Island in 1931, by a German, Dr Eckener, on the *Graf Zeppelin*, the archipelago was closed to Westerners until 1991, when a Norwegian party was granted access to Hooker Island. There they refurbished a couple of abandoned huts, and built a new one. The Nazis, however, were able to set up a clandestine meteorological station on Alexandra Land in 1943/4. The first two western cruises visited the archipelago in June and July 1992, followed 12 months later by a further two, of which ours was the last.

Klavdiya Yelanskaya was built in 1976 at Pola (Pula), Yugoslavia (Croatia), 100m long, 16.2m beam, displacing 3,923 tons, and with a crew of 80. Her captain was Anatoliy Cherepanov. She was capable of 16 knots. Our icebreaker was the 20,791 ton *Taymyr*, one of eight Russian nuclear-powered icebreakers keeping sea lanes north of Russia open in winter. She was built in Finland in 1988, and carried a crew of 110, and 15 cadets. Her captain was Alexander Kharkov. Both vessels were owned and operated by the Murmansk Shipping Co.

Tromsø to Bear Island, 17 July, 313nm. (Noon posn: 71.87°N 19.88°E)

We boarded at 2200 on 16 July after a weather-delayed flight from Newcastle (via Bergen), and sailed at 0130/17th. (At Tromso (69.63°N 18.97°E, air 16°C, sea 7°C) and beyond, the sun did not set). Throughout the cruise we followed Norwegian time. By 0600, the Norwegian coast lay well astern.


90 E
90 E
0
North Pole
85 N
80 N
75 N
FRANZ JOSEF LAND
50 E
85 N
George Land
Alexandra Land
Hooker I.
Northbrook I.
ARCTIC OCEAN
KARA SEA
NOVAYA ZEMLYA
SPITSBERGEN
80 N
M
NA
L
B
South Cape
BARENTS SEA
50 E
Bear I.
17/7
75 N
North Cape
Murmansk
Hammerfest
Tromsø
RUSSIA
70 N
NORWEGIAN SEA
NORWAY
KEY
B = Barentsburg
L = Longyearbyen
NA = Ny Ålesund
M = Magdalenefjord
0
60 N
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MILES

(over 79°N) from 1555 to 2320 in a flat calm, with up to 50 Glaucous Gulls gathered around the ship. In the fjord were also Kittiwakes, Little Auks (nesting on cliffs high up), Brunnich's and Black Guillemots *Cepphus grylle*, Arctic Terns, a pair of light-morph Arctic Skuas, and Snow Buntings. We made a feet-wet landing by Zodiac on a sandy beach, where a large colony of Arctic Terns had eggs nearby, and several pairs protested, especially when we walked past the birds to visit a whalermen's memorial. One Arctic Skua hovered a metre above my head and landed only 3m from me - a superb photo. Not far from a newly-built wooden ranger's hut, a local trapper had set up a couple of tents and was selling postcards and souvenir items made from reindeer horn. After a barbecue, we took Zodiac trips to the stupendous Magdalena Glacier at the head of the fjord, from which ice periodically drifted down the fjord; floes and small blue bergs served as roosts for guillemots and Kittiwakes. In the glacier was an enormous blue ice-cave, and we had to ride over a wave caused when part of its "ceiling" crashed down into the water.

Magdalenefjord (Spitsbergen) to Northbrook Island (Franz Josef Land), 20-23 July, 1,024nm. (Noon posns: 77.0°N 11.15°E (21st), 75.83°N 28.11°E (22nd), and 79.91°N 45.73°E (23rd)).

Throughout this leg, (sea 4°C), we saw varying numbers of Fulmars, with Kittiwakes at most times. The wind did not rise above F/2, and there was fog at first, then the weather was cloudy to overcast, clearing somewhat after 1600 on the 22nd, (air 10°C), but overcast to cloudy with mist patches on the 23rd. It was partly cloudy in the Cambridge Strait (Franz Josef Land) and on the run down to Northbrook Island, when at 2000/23rd the air temperature dropped to its lowest at -2°C.

Heavy pack-ice lay to the north of Magdalenefjord, also right around the eastern side of Spitsbergen to South Cape, so we had to take a more southerly track to reach Franz Josef Land. This brought us almost to Bear Island before we steered NE, passing through 75°N 25°E at 0718 on 22nd. We passed within 50nm SE of Hopen Island at noon on 22nd. We frequently had to alter course to avoid heavy ice.

On 21st we saw six Fulmars at 0930, 12 Dolphins at 1810, pilot whales at 2200; at 2040 two Brunnich's Guillemots, a Herring Gull, ten Fulmars, and two Glaucous Gulls (which perched on the mast and railings up forward), and an hour later two Kittiwakes and a Puffin, with Brunnich's Guillemots thereafter increasing to 20 in one sighting. We saw our first Polar Bear at 0500/22nd, then at 1155 a Kittiwake and Brunnich's Guillemots, and at 1330 seven Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus* which remained around the ship for 10 mins before moving off together, also ten Fulmars, 25 Kittiwakes and four Brunnich's Guillemots. A Minke Whale was seen at 1600, and at 1845 a Long-tailed Skua *S. longicaudus*, six Pomarine Skuas and Kittiwakes. At midnight we saw one Pomarine Skua, eight Kittiwakes and six Brunnich's Guillemots, and one Fulmar, and 40 Kittiwakes 5 mins later. At 0010/23rd a group of six Pomarine Skuas once again came around the ship, also eight Fulmars, ten Kittiwakes and 16 Brunnich's Guillemots.

At 0340/23rd (78.67°N 40.24°E), we made our rendezvous with the *Taymyr*. At 0840, there were young Glaucous Gulls, Fulmars, Kittiwakes and five Brunnich's Guillemots, and at 1207 four Ivory Gulls, Kittiwakes and Brunnich's Guillemots, with increasing pack-ice. That afternoon, the

icebreaker led us into the Cambridge Strait, between Alexandra Land (rising to 382m) and George Land (416m), the two large islands in SW Franz Josef Land, where we met varying patches of open water. At Cape Nansen, on George Land, north of Smith Bay in the strait, we sighted five Polar Bears, one swimming, one lying on the ice, a female with a cub, and one climbing half way up the 230m escarpment, also some Walrus. At 1730 we reached our northernmost point (80.61°N 47.83°E), where very heavy pack-ice prevented us from proceeding to Hooker Island, via Cape Thomas and the NE part of the strait. We therefore missed passing the manned Nagurskoye polar station, with a snow airstrip, towards the east end of Alexandra Land, which I believe the Russians did not wish us to see. Although this would not have been a challenge to the *Taymyr*, there was the danger of the ice re-freezing behind the icebreaker, trapping our cruise ship. Also omitted, due to the ice, was Markham Sound and Hayes Island (242m), NE of Hooker Island, where the Russians have another manned research station, Krenkel, set up in 1963. We retraced our course and headed SE and E, through open water, anchoring finally off Northbrook Island at 2315.

Northbrook Island to NW of Bell Island (Franz Josef Land), 24 July, 53nm. (Noon posn: 79.98°N 49.99°E, off Cape Flora, SW end of Northbrook Island).

Both Northbrook (355m) and Bell (362m) Islands lie on the 80°N parallel. It was cloudy to overcast, the wind calm at noon and 1600, otherwise F/2, the air 6°C, sea 2°C. The two vessels remained moored together throughout the day. Cape Flora is named for the vegetation, the densest in Franz Josef Land, and was a base for four expeditions, and several rescues; also for attempts to reach the North Pole. The rocky shore, as with all shores in Franz Josef Land, was choked with ice. Beneath the lavas are sedimentary rocks with coal deposits. On landing (0910-1145), we visited the remains of the 1895-98 Jackson-Harmsworth expedition camp (four buildings, mainly of wood); except for one tiny hut this is now reduced to foundations, and loose beams and planks. Beyond the hut were five large rusty drums. The low-lying khaki-coloured plain was largely covered with soft springy vegetation, made up mostly of mosses, grasses and lichens, with poppies, saxifrages and other species. This extended up the escarpment slopes to high rocky cliffs inhabited by thousands of nesting Kittiwakes, Little Auks and Brunnich's Guillemots. A Kittiwake attacked a Brunnich's Guillemot and forced it out to sea; behaviour no doubt arising from a shortage of suitable nesting sites. The cover on the lower slopes was greener, due to rich fertilization by guano from the birds above. Around a large melt-water pond near the shore were two Purple Sandpipers (with four young), Herring Gulls, Kittiwakes and Snow Buntings. Pomarine Skuas flew over. Once back aboard, we took the Zodiacs NE, following the shore, where Kittiwakes loafed on a large iceberg.

At 1340 the two ships moved to the southern entrance of the British Channel, NW of Bell Island. From there we took a Zodiac trip north towards Bruce Island (height 301m). A highlight here was our close approach of eight large Walrus on an ice-floe, and we also saw Ivory Gulls, Kittiwakes, Little Auks and Brunnich's Guillemots. At 1805 we made a landing on the low-lying north end of Bell Island, for one hour, visiting a still intact large wooden hut, built in 1881 by the British explorer Benjamin Leigh Smith of the yacht *Eira*. This hut was almost filled with ice, but Russian graffiti from 1931, 1935 and

1961 was discernible on the walls inside. At one of its corners lay a Walrus tusk. Outside, the rough stony surface was only sparsely peppered with vegetation - isolated lichens, poppies, etc - also patches of snow and a shallow melt-water pond, inhabited by Ivory Gulls and Kittiwakes, and a pair of Arctic Skuas.

Walrus, British Channel - between George Land and Bruce Island, Franz Josef Land, 80°00.6'N 48°57.4'E, 24 Jul'93. Photo: B.W. Rowlands.

British Channel to Hooker Island, Franz Josef Land, 25-26 July, 64nm. (Noon posns: 80.14°N 48.96°E (25th), 80.20°N 51.66°E (26th)).

On 25th, the helicopter developed mechanical problems, and we spent the day aboard, cruising the British Channel. The weather was cloudy, the wind calm to F/3, the air 2°C, sea 3°C. With the ever-changing ice conditions, we encountered open water further north than expected, and were able to approach Eton Island (71m), west of Hooker Island. Birds present were Fulmars, Glaucous Gulls, Kittiwakes and Brunnich's Guillemots. By 2130 (80.33°N 50.97°E), *Klavdiya Yelanskaya* was halted by solid pack ice.

The next morning (26th), with the ice gradually expanding again, we had to move slowly SE by 0800 (80.23°N 51.38°E), when we transferred to the *Taymyr*. It was cloudy, but windless. The icebreaker then brought us through the heavy pack-ice, more than two metres thick, to Hooker Island (576m), where we anchored in Tikhaya Bay (80.33°N 52.77°E), while *Klavdiya Yelanskaya* remained in open water. We saw a Polar Bear and three Walrus. We landed at Hooker Island's Papanyin Meteorological Station at 1030, until 1410, including a barbecue lunch.

Founded in 1929, but abandoned in 1963, the deserted settlement of 20 wooden buildings, (dilapidated but still largely intact), was for me most evocative. Signs of decay, hardship and privation pervaded the area, with casks, spars, rusty drums, gas cylinders, bottles, a bath, a rusty winch and numerous bits of debris strewn about the place - evidence of a fascinating but depressing story; also two rusty sno-cats of which one stood in a "garage" choked with ice. Its fan-belt however was still intact! The large doors of the garage had long since been blown off. Other prominent features were a tall power generator windmill, from which sections had crashed down, and framework masts, Stephenson's screens, sledges and husky kennels. Partly embedded in cushions of green moss, was an ancient leather shoe. What appeared to be a large coal-store was now filled with ice; rails on a wooden

Papanyin Research Station (1929-63), now abandoned, Hooker Island, Franz Josef Land, 26 Jul'93. Photo: B.W. Rowlands.

ramp leading down to the shore had been bent away from the lower part of the ramp, probably by ice, while coal lay in a large pile nearby. In marked contrast, the assembly numbering on the timbers of the new Norwegian hut stood out clearly. Above the rocky shore lay a large crude wooden boat, possibly built by the 1941 overwintering team in a desperate attempt to escape; they were stranded there until the end of the war in 1945, probably due to U-boat activity in the Barents Sea. The base was normally relieved every summer.

Papanyin was now a far cry from its heyday. In 1932-33 it served as an International Polar Year observatory, likewise during the International Geophysical Year in 1957-58. It was also a base for early Arctic aviators. But the vegetation was more substantial than on Bell Island, and brilliant cushions of reddish mosses flanked a small stream which gurgled through the ruins. Near a number of graves was a wooden memorial to the Russian Arctic explorer Georgii Ia Sedov, of the vessel *Sviatoi Foka*, who died in Franz Josef Land in 1914. Lying on rocks supporting another 1914 marker was a wreath, faded with age, but its carnations were still recognisable, no doubt preserved by successions of snow and ice over the decades. Another grave, dated 1937, was surmounted by a wooden aircraft propeller. There were few birds but we did see Arctic Skuas, Glaucous and Ivory Gulls, Kittiwakes, Little Auks, Brunnich's Guillemots and Snow Buntings.

Hooker Island and Rubini Rock, Franz Josef Land, to Tromsø, 26-29 July, 852nm. (Noon posns: 77.71°N 39.21°E (27th), 73.59°N 26.60°E (28th)).

On our flight back to the *Taymyr* we landed briefly (1413-1420) on the summit of Rubini Rock, (200m high), across the bay. Rubini hosted vast colonies of Little Auks and Brunnich's Guillemots, on vertical sides dropping sheer to the pack-ice below. The best view of the birds would have been from the Zodiacs, had there been open water. We were unable to observe them from the summit but were compensated by a spectacular view across the bay to the Hooker settlement and beyond, with pack-ice to the horizon. The rocky summit - a raised beach - appearing black, as if burnt, was covered with

black lichens. Dotting the surface in places were also small patches of pale-coloured lichens, with occasional sulphur-coloured buttercups and poppies. The sun emerged, but the wind was up and the pilot could not linger. We sailed at 1430, passing a Ringed Seal. The rising wind (to F/3) had in the meantime brought more ice in towards Hooker Island, and it was 1600 before we finally broke out into open water (80.17°N 51.57°E). With conditions too rough to transfer back to *Klavdiya Yelanskaya*, either by mooring the two ships together or by Zodiac, we had to run south to a lee patch NE of Northbrook Island, where a particularly wet transfer by Zodiac was completed by 1930. We then took a SW'ly course away from the archipelago, passing south of Bell Island before having our final view of Franz Josef Land swallowed by a dense bank of fog.

Taymyr remained with us until 0810/27th when she circled us in farewell. Her next charter was to escort two Japanese oil tankers along the North East Passage. We had thin fog with ice-floes in view all day, the ice building up from 1600 and forcing us down to 6 knots. At times it was flat calm, the wind reaching only F/1, the air 5°C, sea 3°C. At 1700 (76.8°N) a Polar Bear swam from one floe to another and scrambled out, loping across the ice in determined strides. We saw Fulmars, two Pomarine Skuas, Kittiwakes, two Little Auks and five Brunnich's Guillemots. Our ship burst out of the ice at 1928 (76.70°N 36.30°E), the last berg disappearing astern in two minutes. The fog lasted until 1300 on 28th, when the wind rose to F/3, thereafter dropping to F/2, and calm on the approach to the Norwegian coast, the air 14°C, sea 4°C. We were scheduled to pass North Cape, but due to the ice delays, had to run straight for Tromsø. Fulmars, Herring Gulls and Brunnich's Guillemots were seen all day. At 1330, a Great Skua *Catharacta skua* was seen off by two Pomarine Skuas and at 1700 there were 46 Kittiwakes and seven Pomarines. We enjoyed our last midnight sun in clear conditions and finally docked in Tromsø at 0700/29th, in good time for our return flight, via Stavanger, to Newcastle.

Conclusion. At the time of writing, two further cruises to Franz Josef Land had been advertised. Set for July 1994, one was aboard the *Akademik Sergey Vavilov*, out of Spitsbergen only; the other on the icebreaker *Yamal*, on a trip to the North Pole out of Kirkenes. With western access, and the Russians' need for foreign exchange, further visits can be expected. But, due to the prohibitive cost, the very short season and low numbers of passengers (70-90) per vessel, visitors should remain limited. I do hope this will remain so, for any large numbers ashore at the few landing points would have serious implications for the sensitive local ecosystems, for which the High Arctic is indeed renowned.

My thanks go to Bobby Tulloch for a superb introduction to far-northern seabirds, also to John Mitchell and Michael Wigglesworth, for perusal of this manuscript.

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LANDBIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA, 1993

Summarised by Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E., Royal Navy.

The following landbird observations have been extracted by Captain Peter Chilman from seabird record sheets received from the Met. Staff of OWS *Cumulus* operating at or near Station LIMA (57°N 20°W - 210nm WSW Rockall, 450nm S. Iceland). In the 20 years I have been doing this annual analysis, this is the first time I have received no landbird record sheets from this important regular source of data, and this analysis lacks the normal details of weather factors affecting landbird migration. The following species were noted, on the dates shown, but without identification details:

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*. One on 26 March.
Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*. 28 Oct (2).
Eider *Somateria molissima*. One prob. on 24 May.
Merlin *Falco columbarius*. One on 9 May, dep. north.
Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*. One on 2 Jan.
Dunlin *Calidris alpina*. 12 May (1), 19 May (1), 23 May (1).
Knot *Calidris canutus*. 28 Oct (1).
Sanderling *Calidris alba*. 19 May (3), 23 May (1).
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*. 26 Jun (1).
Curlew *Numenius arquata*. 12 May (4).
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*. 22 Apr (1), 23 Apr (1), 22 May (1).
Swift *Apus apus*. One on 8 May, found dead am 9th. One probable on 17 Jun.
Hoopoe *Upupa epops*. One aboard 0600-1100 on 3 Sep. (see below)
House Martin *Delichon urbica* 26 May (1), 27 July (1).
Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. 21 May (1), 22 July (1).
"Wagtail". (White/Pied *Motacilla alba* presumed).12 May (1), 15 Sep (2) 16 Sep (1),
Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*. 29 Oct (1), 30 Oct (1).
Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. 23 May (1), 2 Sep (1), 14-15 Sep (2), 4 Nov (1).
"Redstart" (no details) *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*? One juv on 10 Oct, 28 Nov (1).
Blackbird *Turdus merula*. 28 Mar (1♀), 19 Apr (1), 28 Oct (1).
Redwing *Turdus iliacus*. 11 Oct (1), 30 Oct (1).
Chaffinch *Fingilla coelebs*. 30 Oct (1).
Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*. 24 Oct (1), 31 Oct-1 Nov two aboard feeding on dead landbirds and raw meat from the galley.

The Hoopoe.

The following details were provided by Charles Johnstone, Met. Observer, as follows: The ship had been stopped and drifting for several days; the position at 03/0001 was 58°20'N 21°36'W. Winds had been S'ly F4 02/0001-0400, with continuous fog (vis 1 km or less); 02/0500-03/0200 winds decreasing SE'ly F3-4, weather fair and overcast. Sometime between 0001 and 0400, an unidentified ship was seen, and it is suspected that this may have been the origin of the Hoopoe.

It was first sighted at 03/0600, on deck, behind a rolled-up pilot ladder. It flew out to sea when approached, with distinctive "butterfly" type of flight. Sighted again at 0800 in the same place, it allowed approach to within 3 ft and was identified as a Hoopoe. Photographs were taken (but not forwarded). Raisins and a bowl of fresh water was placed nearby, but the bird flew off, and was chased by several Kittiwakes. The Hoopoe returned aboard and was last

seen at 1105, when the vessel got under way, and commenced steaming SW. It was seen astern, flying after the ship, but failing to keep up.

COMMENT. The highlight was obviously the Hoopoe. This species is regularly recorded aboard ships, mostly in the Med, Red Sea and Persian Gulf, but a sighting in this area is unprecedented. There can be no doubt about the identification, but a photograph would have been a useful record of this remarkable event. A ship-assisted passage seems highly likely, but no reports have been received from elswhere.

The number of species (23) compares with previous years: 1986 (14), 1987 (17), 1988 (38), 1989 (14), 1990 (13), 1991 (19) and 1992 (17). Further details of the "redstart" would have been helpful, and the Carrion Crow records are unusual.

M.B.C.

SEABIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA, 1993

Summarised by Captain P.W.G. Chilman, M.N.

All observations are from OWS Cumulus, and the format of the summary remains unchanged. The total number of observation days for 1993 was 285 - eleven days less than 1992.

Totals of daily counts (including immatures shown in brackets, where recorded) were:

Fulmar 25,874 (29 blue phase); Great Shearwater 5,947; Sooty Shearwater 111; Manx Shearwater 25; Gannet 252 (56); Herring Gull 32 (1); Lesser Black-backed Gull 125 (23); Great Black-backed Gull 415 (164); Glaucous Gull 18 (3); and Kittiwakes 41,741.

Fulmars have increased again this year, up by about 4,800, although the number of blue phase was down to 29, from the peak of 338 in 1991. There is still no pattern that I can see - this year the highest month was September, while in 1992 September was the fifth, in 1991 it was seventh, and in 1990 it was second.

The Kittiwake total this year rose from 22,932 to 41,741, a huge increase of 82%. The figure for September was 24,565, equal to an average of 982 per day, and over ten times the figure for last year (2,116). However, for most months, numbers were lower than 1992. A ringed Kittiwake was noted in August, and a Kittiwake with a yellow ring on its left leg was recorded on 16 September.

Last year I noted a large increase in numbers of Great Shearwaters - 1,768 in 1992, against 49, 29, and 78 in the previous three years. But the number this year has soared dramatically to 5,947, of which 5,356 were recorded in October, and 493 in September.

I imagine these variations in numbers are largely due to varying weather and current patterns, but it would be interesting to know if the total populations, especially of Fulmars and Kittiwakes, are increasing.

Storm-petrels. These are reported, in small numbers from station LIMA, which is not surprising since they are not easy to see from a small ship. June is the only month, over the last eight years, in which no storm-petrel has been

reported. The three species reported in the years 1986-93 are: British, Wilson's and Leach's, but they are difficult to identify, unless closely seen, and much depends on the experience of the observer; the first two species are the most likely to be confused with each other. Doubt must therefore exist about some identifications reported which were:

Leach's Storm-petrel - 1986 (1), 1988 (5), other years (-)

British Storm-petrel - 1986 (10), 1987 (5), 1988 (5), 1989 (9), 1990 (4), 1991 (3), 1992 (-), 1993 (-).

Wilson's Storm-petrel 1986 (3), 1987 (1), 1993 (5), other years (-).

There were no reports of oiled birds this year.

As usual, we have to thank the Met. Staff of OWS Cumulus, for their continued interest in providing this information.

1993 Summary of seabird sightings at Station LIMA (57°N 20°W)

Month 1993	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Observation days (285)	16	22	23	25	27	17	24	26	25	29	29	21
Fulmar	o	o	o	x	x	o	x	x	x	x	x	o
Great Shearwater					-				o	x	+	
Sooty Shearwater		-	-			-	-	-	+	+	-	
Manx Shearwater							-	-	-			
Wilsons Storm-petrel					-							-
Gannet		-	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	
Great Skua		-	-		+	→	-	-	+	+		
Pomarine Skua					-	-	-	-	+	+		
Arctic Skua					-		-	-	-	-		
Long-tailed Skua					-							
Common Gull			-									
Herring Gull			-				-	-	-	-	-	
Lesser Black-back			-	+		-	+	-	-	-	-	
Great Black-back	-				+		-	+	+	-	-	
Glaucous Gull	-			-			-		-	-	-	
Kittiwake	o	x	x	x	o	+	+	x	x	x	o	o
Black-headed Gull					-				-			
Arctic Tern					-	-	-	-				
Common Tern								-	-			
Little Auk	-			-		-				-	-	
Guillemot	-				-	-	+	-	-			
Puffin							-					

Key - Occasional sightings o Average 10 - 49 per day
+ Average 1 - 9 per day x Average 50 or more per day

SEABIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM MET. LOGBOOKS.

By Captain P.W.G. Chilman, M.N.

The number of seabird reports from Met. Logbooks received, thanks to the kindness of the Marine department of the Meteorological Office, has much decreased in the last two years. Many reports concerned boobies, tropicbirds and Sooty Terns from known area. Others were of various petrels which, unfortunately, ussually could not be identified, for lack of sufficient detail, although I was sometimes able to suggest probable identifications. But three reports deserve special mention:

SS ***British Ranger***, Captain S. Barker, submitted a report of a Cory's Shearwater Calonectris diomedea aboard, in posn. 36.2°N 12.6°W, approx. 220nm SW of Lisbon, on 18 Aug'93. It was found in a very bedraggled state, taken into shelter and offered food (which it declined). On 19th it was motionless all day, and it was feared it would die. But on 20th, it perked up, and began to move about the deck, and at daylight on 21st it was found to have left - somewhere in the vicinity of Ushant. It had a ring on the left leg, inscribed "OO1676 Lisboa"; I have notified the proper authority, and hope to report where it was ringed, in due course.

MV ***British Success***, Captain J. Buchanan, reported a White-tailed Tropicbird, of the Christmas Island race, *Phaeton lepturus fulvus*, aboard in the Timor Sea in July'92. The accompanying photograph clearly showed the overall apricot wash on the white plumage. I do not know the Timor Sea well enough to say whether this race is commonly found in the area, but for a species which wanders as widely as this one, it seems quite possible.

MV ***Liverpool Bay***, Captain B. Cushman, found a Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*, with a badly broken wing and other injuries, aboard in posn. 10°N 66°E. It was taken into care, tended, and after much effort, persuaded to feed. Attempts were made to set the wing, but without success. On arrival at Southampton, 11 days later, it appeared to be in good health, and was feeding well, but the wing was quite useless. It was then handed over to the RSPCA, but it is not known wahat happened to it thereafter.

My thanks to all who sent in reports; they were all of interest, even the ones which could not be identified.

Captain P.W.G. Chilman MN., 15 Garbett Way, Bishopthorpe, York. YO2 1SF.

The Trans-Atlantic Snowy Owl - in Holland?

As reported last year (*Sea Swallow* 42: p70), the Snowy Owl aboard OOCL *Challenger* was last seen at 1600 on 29 Feb'92, in the English Channel, heading towards Folkestone, Kent. Chris Winter (of Alkmaar, Holland) (*pers. comm*) reports that a Snowy Owl appeared in Holland a week later, on 8 Mar'92. He writes:

" Remarkably, this bird stayed at the Maasvlahte waterway. Less than 100m away from the place where the bird was present, every day hundreds of ships pass on their way to Rotterdam harbour. It may be possible the owl was "assisted" to Holland by another ship".

COMMENT. No reports have been received of a subsequent sighting in Kent, nor any further details of either record, so it seems probable this was the same bird.

M.B.C.

FURTHER NOTES FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

by Captain D. M. Simpson, MN.

A good site near Kiunga - the Agrim Sawmill Area.

21 Feb'92. Our local manager, Bob Lock, dropped me off at the old, now disused sawmill some 10km out of Kiunga, on the Tububil road. This is not the flat country of the river bank, but with undulating low hills; the beginning of the foot-hills, which eventually build up to become the Star Mountains. It is still lowland forest, but sufficiently different to introduce one or two bird species not seen along the river banks.

The area immediately around the sawmill has been well logged out, and is scrubby, but with some good stands of palms. The long boles have many thin whitish rings around them, thus appearing like giant bamboos; these are Gulubia Palms *Gulubia costata*.

I walked a couple of miles down an old logging track through this type of country without seeing much, apart from various parrots, lories, cockatoos and mynah birds. I eventually reached the end of the logging track and was confronted by good forest, where I spent the day. A flowering tree produced interesting species such as: Rainbow Lorikeet ***Trichoglosssus haematodus*** and Tawny-breasted Honeyeater ***Xanthotis flaviventer***.

A pair of big, smart-looking manucodes were seen in the canopy of good forest were almost certainly Crinkle-collared Manucodes ***Manucodia chalybata***. They were NOT Trumpet Manucodes, and I believe the habitat is wrong for the very similar looking Glossy-mantled Manucode, a bird more associated with savannah woodland. I also fancied I could see the "crinkly" feathers on the nape. This pair also lacked the "floppy and lanky" look that I associate with Glossy-mantled.

In this area, I also observed Rufous Babblers, Hooded Butcherbirds, and one or two female probable Raggiana Bird of Paradise ***Paradisaea raggiana***. I may also have had a glimpse of Meyer's Friarbird ***Philemon meyeri***, in the canopy, but this bird is never easy to see well.

On my hike back towards the sawmill, I saw a large blue-grey cuckoo-shrike, with a big bill and long tail, standing on a branch in the canopy. Certainly this was the Stout-billed Cuckoo-Shrike ***Sericulus caeruleogrisea***, another species of the foot-hills, and a first for me.

My prime reason for visiting this area was to look for the beautiful Flame Bowerbird ***Sericulus aureus***, which is known to occur here. I did NOT see it, but the whole area looks good, and is worth further investigation.

Return visit 16-18 October 1992.

After signing off from *Bosset Chief*, I spent a couple of days exploring the Agrim Sawmill area, some 10km from Kiunga along the Tabubil road. Several good birds were seen here:

Flame Bowerbird ***Sericulus aureus***. On 16th and 18th, many females, and several brilliant males, in fruiting trees, about 2 miles from the sawmill, down an old logging track. The adult male is probably the most beautiful of the Fly River birds.

Yellow-billed Kingfisher ***Halcyon torotoro***. In a forest clearing, on 16th, its clear "police-whistle" call attracted my attention. It was standing on the bare

branch of a large tree. I have long been on the look-out for this species.
Ornate Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus ornatus*. A good sight of one - maroon shoulder-patches diagnostic.

A female Greater Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea apoda* and a female King Bird of Paradise *Cicinnurus regius* were also seen here; also other interesting species such as Papuan Mountain Pigeon *Gymnophaps albertsii* Dwarf Koel *Microdynamis parva* and Rufous-backed Fantail *Rhipidura rufidorsa*.

Hook-billed Creek Trail - ARM 459.

28 April 1992. On the forest floor near a stream, I saw what I first took to be a small partridge, moving away from me, down the trail. With its head held horizontally, it seemed to have a green mantle and rusty orange head. This was merely a glimpse with the naked eye, but I must assume that this was the Bare-eyed Rail *Eulabeornis plumbeiventris*, which is the only one to fit this description; the rain-forest habitat is right for it, with plenty of ferns, briars and leaf-litter. NOTE. I revisited this location several times subsequently, and have failed to confirm this identification; I cannot exclude the possibility that this could have been a young scrub-fowl.

30 April. Also here, I had a very good look at an Orange-footed Scrub-fowl *Megapodius freycinet*; there is no doubt that this and all other Fly River scrub-fowl I have seen belong to the race *reinwardt*, often considered a separate species from *freycinet*. It is interesting that this species should be found along this trail, it being set in amongst lowland flood forest. But some of the banks of this particular stream are fairly high, and probably not liable to flooding, thus making it safe for the birds incubating mounds. This trail continues to yield interesting subjects for the naturalist.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*, a new species for the Upper Fly.

On 14 June, at ARM 315.5, I saw a fine pair standing on a mudbank. They were in non-breeding plumage, with the black crown heavily streaked with white. Although I have sighted this species off Umuda Island in the past, this is the first time I have actually seen it along the river, and far up the river at that. The Field Guide describes its status thus "A generally scarce visitor to the south coast; no records from the north." This is therefore an unusual and interesting record. It is a big, and easily recognized species, and it is most unlikely that I have overlooked it in the past.

Visit to Purutu Island, 3 July 1992.

Purutu is typical of the islands in the Fly River delta, being low, flat and swampy. It is covered by a dense forest of Mangrove and Nipah Palms.

This afternoon, I went with the ship's boat along a tidal creek at the NE end of Purutu Island, with my 2nd Mate, Raka Tom, accompanying me. We travelled a couple of miles along the creek into the middle of the island.

We spent a couple of hours along this creek, and identified the following species including:

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
Little Green Heron *Butorides striatus*
Brahminy Kite *Haliaster indus*
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
Superb Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus superbus*
Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bicolor*
Dusky Lory *Pseudeos fuscata* - flying overhead, in flocks.

Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi*
Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta*
Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus orientalis*
Long-billed Cerygone *Cerygone magnirostris*
Leaden Flycatcher *Myiagra rubecula*
Black Butcherbird *Cracticus quoyi*
Brown-Backed Honeyeater *Ramsayornis modestus*

Of special interest was a shallow stick-nest on the branch of a mangrove tree, 2-3m above the surface of the creek. Inside were two downy chicks, of a buffish colour, with pinkish bills. I initially thought that maybe this was evidence of Little Egret breeding, but this was certainly a nest of the Little Green Heron. I have since found other nests of this species, whereas I have found no evidence of any of the white egrets breeding along the Fly, and conclude that they are all visitors from Australia.

Several small closed nests were found hanging from branches over the water, in a sort of loose colony. They belonged to the species **Brown-backed Honeyeater**, which I observed going in and out of the nests.

I think most of the trees on the island belong to the mangrove family, although some of them are of a substantial size. There are one or two small Coconut Palm groves along this creek, in addition to the large numbers of Nipah Palms. Nothing else of great interest was seen, apart from a large Monitor Lizard sighted by Raka Tom.

4 August 1992, unexpected visitors to Kiunga, (ARM 458)

Australian Pratincoles *Stiltia isabella*. Being situated in the geographical centre of new Guinea, Kiunga is not normally associated with *Charadriformes*. Only the **Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*** is numerous here along the river banks, during the northern winter months. You can imagine my surprise therefore, when, am on 4th, I awoke to find that a flock of **Australian Pratincoles** had invaded the wharf area of Ok Tedi compound. Two or three dozen birds spent most of the day prowling around, generally electing to run out of the way of approaching trucks and workmen, apparently unconcerned about such activity; they had all departed by evening, but reappeared next day, and remained in the area for about two months.

This species is a long-legged pratincole, with a short square tail. In Australia, it is a common nomad on open and semi-arid plains, mainly in northern and central parts of the continent. It moves coastwards in winter, and many migrate to New Guinea, and even as far as Java and Borneo (though I have never encountered it on my travels there). I have seen these birds in the open country of the Fly River mid-reaches, but this is my first encounter with them here, in the upper reaches. Most of my birding in this area is carried out in the forest, but this observation leads me to believe that I ought to pay some attention to Kiunga airfield, which surely offers a more suitable venue for migrating waders than the Ok Tedi industrial compound.

A landing at Finch Corner, ARM 246 - 8 April 1992.

Together with Spencer Sutton (Chief Engineer), and two seamen I took the ship's boat and landed her for about an hour; it was hard work stumbling around through the boggy grassland. Two young Rusa Deer were surprised, and the two seamen tried to herd them into the river, in order to catch them with the boat. But the deer were much too fleet of foot, and easily made good their escape. The following birds were seen:

Australian Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*
Plumed/Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*
Red-backed Button-quail *Turnix maculosa*
Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*
Pheasant Coucal *Centropus phasianinus*
Lesser Black Coucal *Centropus bernsteini*
Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*
Broad-billed Roller *Eurostomus orientalis*
Willy Wagtail *Rhidipura leucophrys*
Golden-headed Cisticola *Cisticola exilis*
Black Mannikin *Lonchura stygia*

Two pairs of Button-quail were flushed in this short excursion, which leads me to believe it is probably quite common in these grasslands.

Hook-billed Creek Trail (ARM 459).

12-18 August 1992. Thanks to a low river, we spent the week ending 18th anchored at Kiunga, whence I was able to make several early morning rambles along Hook-billed Creek trail, and these resulted in the additions of three species to my life-list, plus several other birds of special interest:

White-eared Catbird *Ailuroedus buccoides*. This shy species, a member of the Bowerbird family, is endemic to New Guinea. I have heard its harsh calling before, along this same trail. This morning (14th), I had a good look at one feeding in a small fruiting tree, together with other birds.

Yellow-eyed/Grant's Starling *Aplonis mystacea*. This is another endemic to PNG. Several were seen on each visit (12, 13, 14 and 16 August), in the canopy of a small but tall emergent tree. The eye appears almost white, in the field, and the small tuft of feathers on the fore-crown is a distinctive feature. Otherwise, the species closely resembles the red-eyed **Metallic Starling *A. metallica***, which is abundant in this area.

Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida*. I have searched for this in the past at suitable habitats in SE Asia, Borneo and Philippines, always without success. So I was delighted to find it here, at the SE perimeter of its range. I observed several adults and immatures, hopping about the ferns and leaf litter on the dark forest floor (12, 13 and 14 August).

Red-billed Pitta *Pitta erythrogaster*. Only one was identified (on 16 Aug), though doubtless there were more about, in the same locality and habitat as the Hooded Pittas. I have seen this species before at Lake Danau, on Leyte Island, in the Philippines. For many birdwatchers pittas are considered the jewels of the eastern avifauna, and it is always a great thrill to come across these lovely birds.

Forest Bittern *Zonerodias heliosylus*. On two mornings in succession I flushed a single bird from the bank of the creek. Each time it flew silently around a bend, to land somewhere out of sight. I have only met this endemic species on one other memorable occasion near ARM 100 in 1990 (Simpson 1991, page 19); it is easily identified by its profuse blackish barring. This part of the creek is heavily forested, and about one mile in from the main river. My limited observations suggest that this species avoids the banks of the main river, preferring secluded creeks and swamps.

Greater Black Coucal *Centropus menbeki*. This huge black cuckoo is also endemic to New Guinea and, being a forest dweller, which keeps largely to the ground and lower storey, is not often seen clearly, but this particular trail usually produces one for me.

Other notable species observed here during this period included -
(* indicates endemic to New Guinea):

Grey-headed Goshawk *Accipiter poliocephalus**
Common Paradise Kingfisher *Tanysiptera galatea*
Black-throated Fantail *Rhipidura maculipectus**
Hooded Monarch *Monarcha manadensis**
Long-billed Honeyeater *Melilestes megarhynchus**

2 October. A strange snipe was observed in the almost dried-up bed of a heavily forested jungle creek. Two white lines on each side of the back were clearly seen, and it looked much less rufous than any other snipe I have ever seen. I believe this was a **Lathams's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii***, but I do appreciate that snipe are extremely difficult to identify in the field.

4 October. About one mile in from the Fly River bank, along the trail, I met a small party of **Broad-billed Fairy-Wren**, in a small tree 10-15 feet above the forest floor. "Buzzy, soft 'Tzee Tzee' notes, not at all like the Emperor Fairy-Wren - broad bills clearly seen. Dark eye-stripe and dark stripe below - some blue on the head, though the birds generally appeared white and olive grey". This is the race *campbelli*, often considered a distinct species, **Campbell's Fairy-Wren *Malurus campbelli***. Of the many splendid birds now sighted along this trail, this is possibly the best.

Trees. I am satisfied that many of the trees along this trail are of the species *Vatica papuana*. Although not a big tree, it is interesting, being a member of the family *Dipterocarpacaea* (Diptocarps). This family comprises the main commercial timber forests of Malaysia, Borneo and the Philippines, now sadly largely gone. Most dipterocarps are huge trees, and there are only about 20 species in New Guinea, compared with something like 262 recorded from Borneo. *Vatica papuana*, apart from being a useful timber tree, is also a source of "dammar" (copal gum), used for varnish. Personally, I prefer to see it standing, and continue to provide a good "pitta" habitat!

Fly Upper Reaches - Notes from Raggi Island area (ARM420) 16-29 September 1992.

The following (70) species were identified in this area. (U) = identification Uncertain:

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*
Great White Egret *Egretta alba*
Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*
Little Green Heron *Butorides striatus*
Crested Hawk *Aviceda subcristata*
Brahminy Kite *Haliaster indus*
White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaetus leucogaster*
Gurney's Eagle *Aquila gurneyi*
Orange-footed Scrub-Fowl *Megapodia reinwardt*
Black-billed Brush-Turkey *Tollegalla fuscirostris*
Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*
Black-billed Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia nigrirostris*
Stephan's Ground-Dove *Chalcophops stephani*
Cinnamon Dround-Dove *Gallicolumba rufigula*
Orange-fronted Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus aurantiifrons*
Coroneted Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus coronulatus*
Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus iozonus*
Pinon Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pinon*
Collared Imperial Pigeon *Ducula muelleri*
Zoe Imperial Pigeon *Ducula zoeae*
Greater Streaked Lory *Chalcopsilla scintillata*
Western Black-capped Lory *Lorius lory*
Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus*
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*
Orange-breasted Fig-Parrot *Cyclopsitta gulielmiterti*
Large Fig-Parrot *Psittaculirostris desmarestii*
Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi*
Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus*
Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolusus*
Long-billed Cuckoo *Rhamphomantis megarhynchus* (U)
Common Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*
Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*
Uniform Swiftlet *Collocalia vanikorensis*
Papuan Spine-tailed Swift *Mearnsia novaeguineae*
Common Paradise Kingfisher *Tanysiptera galatea*
Hook-billed Kingfisher *Melidora macrorrhina*
Rufous-bellied Kookaburra *Dacelo gaudichaud*
Forest Kingfisher *Halcyon macleayii*
Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus orientalis*
Blyth's Hornbill *Rhyticeros plicatus*
Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*
Cicadabird *Coracina tenuirostris*
Golden Cuckoo-Shrike *Campochaera sloetii*
Rufous Babbler *Pomatostomus isidorei*

Emperor Fairy-Wren *Malurus cyanocephalus*
Beccari's Scrub-Wren *Sericornis beccarii* (U)
Yellow-billed Gerygone *Gerygone chrysogaster*
Black Thicket-Fantail *Rhipidura maculipectus*
Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*
Black-faced Monarch *Monarcha melanopsis*
Frilled Monarch *Arses telescopthalmus*
Shining Flycatcher *Myiagra alecto*
White-bellied Pitohui *Pitohui incertus*
Papuan Flowerpecker *Dicaeum pectorale*
Black Sunbird *Nectarinia aspasia*
Dwarf Honeyeater *Oedistona iliophus*
Scrub White-eared Meliphaga *Meliphaga albonotata*
Graceful Meliphaga *Meliphaga gracilis*
Meyer's Friarbird *Philemon meyeri*
Helmeted Friarbird *Philemon buceroides*
White-spotted Mannikin *Lonchura leucosticta*
Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica*
Yellow-faced Mynah *Mino dumontii*
Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*
White-breasted Wood-Swallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*
Hooded Butcherbird *Cracticus cassicus*
Glossy-mantled Manucode *Manucodia atra*
Trumpet Manucode *Manucodia keraudrenii*
Grey Crow *Corvus tristis*

On 19 Sep, I saw my first ever **Cinnamon Ground-Dove = Goldenheart Pigeon**. I flushed two single birds from the ground, in thick leaf litter. Both gave a soft frog-like trill, as they flew low into the surrounding undergrowth. This same morning on Raggi Island, I observed a noisy party of beautiful **Golden Cuckoo-shrikes**.

On 25th, I came across a large incubating mound measuring 18 ft in diameter, and 5 ft in height. It was composed of earth and leaf matter, and set in amongst good forest (consisting largely of *Vatica papuana* and various Fig Trees *Ficus* sp.) Such mounds are common enough along the Fly, but what was unusual was that, scattered all over the mound, almost as if deliberately decorated, were torn pieces of the scarlet blooms of D'Albertis Creeper *Mocuna novaeguineaensis*, also known as "Flame of the Forest". This creeper is one of the most beautiful plants in the lowland jungles, and consists of chains of scarlet flowers, which when festooned over the trees make a brilliant blaze of colour, against the monotonous green of the lowland forest. It seems to grow anywhere, not favouring any particular species of tree, or shrub.

It is most unlikely that the megapodes have deliberately decorated the incubating mound; I have never heard of such habits from these birds. More probably, the birds are oblivious of the colour, and have merely used these flowers as suitable available leaf matter. It is the heat and humidity generated by the rotting vegetation that incubates the birds' eggs.

Although I sighted a **Black-billed Brush-Turkey** in the vicinity of this mound, from its large size, I believe that it had been constructed by **Orange-footed Scrub-Fowl**; the mounds of Scrub Turkeys are generally much smaller.

On 29th, the river level rose, and we were able to proceed upstream to Kiunga. A most unusual sighting was a pair of **Gurney's Eagles** standing atop a large dead tree, at ARM 424. This species is usually a bird of the lower reaches, and this is my first observation of it in the upper reaches.

Vanishing birds of the Fly River

It is with regret that I have to report that certain bird species I used to observe regularly during my early days on the Fly River have all but disappeared.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*. This superb bird needs no introduction. It is my personal favourite. Although never exactly common along the Fly, it was regular and conspicuous in all months of the year. One could count on seeing a

pair in the old "Ox-Bow" just below Kiunga (ARM 456), and I used to see another pair in the area of ARM 300 to ARM 305. It is now over three years since I last observed an Osprey along the Fly River.

Where have they gone, and Why? There are still plenty of fish here. One reason might be the deterioration in the water visiblility below D'Alberti's Junction - the point where the Ok Tedi River joins the Fly River, at ARM 436. Since mining operations began, the Ok Tedi River has become very heavily choked. Much of the sediment has found its way into the Fly, which is itself silting up, especially in the area immediately below this point. The water visibility from here to the sea is now zero. This might account for the vanished Ospreys; they cannot see their prey. The various species of small fish-eating kingfishers one used to see along the river bank have moved away into the clearer water creeks; although other species, such as egrets, kites and eagles, seem to manage well enough along the muddy river. Above D'Alberti's Junction, there is a marked improvement in the water visibility, so this theory does not explain why those Ospreys that used to frequent the Kiunga neighbourhood have also disappeared. The 'Old Ox-Bow' (ARM 456), where they used to frequent, has now sprouted several native houses and gardens, so it may be just a case of human pressure that has driven these birds away. However, I have noted that, if left alone, Ospreys are not greatly concerned about the presence of people. When I was at Broome, Western Australia, there was a pair with a nest and young on the top of the lighthouse on the harbour pier!

STOP PRESS. On 7 Mar'94, I saw an Osprey at ARM 329, on the Irian Jaya/PNG Border, This is the first I've seen along the Fly River for about four years. It appeared to be an immature, being rather dingy brown, but it did have a clear white head, with the distinctive black band down the side. It dived feet first into the murky river and came out with a fine fish, held lengthwise in its talons. It was probably a wanderer from Australia, and I doubt if this represents a real return of the species to the river.

Dorias Hawk *Megatriorchis doriae.* This attractive endemic hawk was never common. It bears a superficial resemblance to the Osprey, but has a very long tail. In 1987 and 1988, I sighted single birds on several occasions in forest clearings, in the Upper Reaches between D'Alberti's Junction and Kiunga, but I have not seen one since then.

Grey-headed Goshawk *Accipiter poliocephalus*. A lovely grey and white hawk with orange legs, eye-ring and cere, I used to see this species quite often along forested creeks in the Kiunga area, but very rarely see one these days. Human presence is probably responsible for the decline of both these hawks.

Southern (=Scheepmaker's) Crowned Pigeon *Goura scheepmakeri*. The 'Crowned Pigeons' are the largest, heaviest and most magnificent of all the world's pigeons. There are only three species, all endemic to New Guinea. The Southern Crowned is the one inhabiting the lowland forests of the southern watershed. In 1987 and 1988, I used to encounter them regularly along the banks of the river and the connecting creeks, usually in pairs and small parties.

On one unforgettable occasion I saw a single bird displaying. It stood on the overhanging bough of a tree at the river's edge, slowly and gracefully pirouetting. It held its wings outspread, umbrella-like. With its grey and maroon plumage and beautiful fan-shaped crest, it presented me with one of

nature's more spectacular performances. The species is much prized by the natives, both for its beautiful plumage and its gastronomic qualities. It is therefore persistantly hunted on a large scale. Local people would often come out to the ship in their dug-out canoes with live "Gouras", for sale or exchange. The canoes still come out with goods to trade, but only rarely does one have a live Coura to barter, nor have I seen one in the wild recently. In fact, it is over two years since my last sighting.

They are terrestrial birds, and very clumsy fliers, so are easily caught. Native hunters usually use dogs on their hunting forays, and I do believe that the Crowned Pigeons have no chance of escape, once these dogs get wind of their presence.

The human (and dog) population along the banks of the Upper Fly River has greatly increased during the past six years, whilst the Crowned Pigeons have almost disappeared. I have often come across stray feral dogs in the jungle, and they must pose a very real threat to the native birdlife.

A most remarkable feature of these dogs is that they never seem to bark - rather, they howl in the manner of wolves, which can give one an eerie feeling when tramping alone along some gloomy forest trail. Another alarming trend amongst local hunters is the increasing use of shotguns. Most hunting is still carried out in the traditional manner ie bows and arrows, and spears. But over the past year I have encountered several hunters carrying shotguns.

STOP PRESS

26 November 1993. Return of the "Goura" to the Fly River, Lower Reaches.

Following my recent notes above, it is with great delight that I can report another sighting of the **Southern Crowned Pigeon.** This the first for three years, and moreover from a part of the river where I have never observed the species before, at ARM 133. All my earlier sightings were in the Upper Reaches.

At 1800, I observed a pair of birds, and then a little further on, a party of three, all gathered at the river edge, on the exposed bank. There has been a drought along the Fly for the past three months, and the jungles have become very parched with most of the creeks completely dried up. This is what must have driven these beautiful birds to venture out from the protective cloak of the forest, onto the exposed river bank; I have never before seen this species completely out in the open.

Incidentally, it is worth mentioning that in this particular area, from about ARM 115 to ARM 150, along both banks of the river, the forest is exceptionally rich, dense and luxuriant - better than anywhere else on the river. There are very few people in this area, and I do believe this would be the best place along the whole Fly to site a National Park, or at least a large Nature Reserve.

On 20 Jan'93 at ARM 235, and on 24 Jan at ARM 246, a very strikingly beautiful male Pied Harrier was observed quartering the grass-lands. On both occasions we were passing at over 10 kts, and I had no the time to record the finer details - which is a pity as I am left with the dilemma of not knowing if this was a male **Papuan Harrier *Circus spinoletus*** or a **Asian Pied Harrier *C. melanoleucos***; the males of both species are similar.

This bird was largely silvery-white, with an all black head and throat, black wing-tips, and black carpal bar. The rump was white, as was the under-body. Certainly I have never seen this bird on the river before, and it was probably the same individual on both occasions.

The Papuan Harrier is, by and large, a bird of the highlands, and I am inclined to believe that this bird was a male Asian Pied Harrier - a new raptor for the Fly River mid-reaches. The dates fit in well for a winter visitor from Asia, and there are odd records of this, from various parts of New Guinea.

MISCELLANEOUS ODDITIES ON THE FLY RIVER

Deer and Flying Foxes

Rusa Deer ***Cervus tiomoriensis.*** This is very common along certain parts of the Fly River, especially between ARM 160 and ARM 200. Sometimes groups of up to 50 may be seen, and the total must in be tens of thousands, in this area alone. Here it is mostly savannah grassland, and swamps, with some woodlands. These deer are not native; they were introduced to the Trans-Fly by the Dutch, apparently in 1928. They are are quite bold, and as a result easily shot. No doubt the odd one will fall prey to the crocodiles, which inhabit the area. Apart from these, and of course men, they would appear to have no other natural enemies. They appear again, in somewhat more forested country, round about ARM 350, but are apparently absent around Kiunga. They probably dislike thick rain-forest.

Greater Flying Fox ***Pteropus neohiburnicus.***
Of all the warm-blooded creatures to be seen along the Fly River, these great fruit-bats must be the most numerous. I don't know just how big they are, but I would estimate their wing-span to be about 4-5ft. In the daytime, they hang in the trees, in large roosts, sometimes numbering thousands. Their strange "mewling and cackling" noises can be heard from half a mile away, as the ship approaches such a roost. In some parts of the river, the sky, at dusk, is filled with them and, more than any other, perhaps this sight typifies the Fly River, for me.

"Swimming the gauntlet!"

On 1 Sep'92, at ARM 287, Spencer Sutton, the Chief Engineer, sighted a large wild boar swimming across the river. This creature looked distinctly worried as the ship approached and then passed close by, and was obviously giving everything it had to make the bank as quickly as possible.

I have now seen a Cassowary, several Rusa Deer, a python (probably a "Green Python"), and finally this boar swim right across the river.

All these creatures put themselves at great risk when they choose to swim the fast-flowing Fly. They are very vulnerable to native hunters, in canoes. Perhaps the greatest risk, however, is posed by the estuarine crocodiles, which grow to 20 ft, or so, in length.

When I was in Sarawak on a birding trip some years ago, and travelling up the Baram River, by canoe, I observed a party of several wild boars swim that river. What motivates these creatures to make such perilous journeys? They really are running, or rather, swimming the gauntlet.

Beware the Bore!

One morning last year (1991), my vessel *Kiunga Chief* had run aground on the shallow tidal crossing at ARM 88. I had the crew lower the anchor, and pile about 100ft of chain on the river-bed, and sat back to wait for the flood tide, as is usual in such circumstances. It was now 1145, and I estimated she would float off at around 1400, but our tidal information is notoriously inaccurate at the period of spring tides.

At 1215, I was sitting in the mess-room, taking lunch, when the ship took a violent lurch, and my dinner-plate shot from under my face, splattering all over the deck. I rushed outside in alarm, thinking we had been struck by some other vessel, and made the deck in time to see a giant wave sweeping away from us, on its majestic way up-stream. On reaching the wheelhouse, I found the ship was now afloat, and riding nicely to her anchor. But the great wave had carried the ship bodily half a mile, or more, up-stream before the anchor took hold.

I estimated that the wave was three metres high. (The Second Mate was suitably reprimanded for failing to detect the oncoming wave!) Today was either the day before, or the day after, the highest tide of the current spring tide. These tidal bores have damaged sizable ships in the past - one big sea-going landing-craft recently had its bow-door carried away, and Dick Randolph's wharf at ARM 100 was demolished. Certainly, they are a serious menace to all small craft.

The odd couple!

15 Feb'92. An engaging sight on the Fly River is to see a large white egret standing alongside a small white egret, both intent on watching for the small fish on which they feed, and apparently quite content with each other's company. The non-birdwatcher may be forgiven for assuming that this is parent and offspring, and he invariably expresses surprise when I explain that they are different species - namely the **Plumed** or **Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*** and the **Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*.** I cannot explain why it is that they favour each other's company, whilst disdaining those of their own kind. Could it be that each bird has its own territory i.e. stretch of river-bank, and objects to others of the same species invading it, whereas it harbours no malice to one of another species; both are competing at the same food source? An interesting question. Both species are very cosmopolitan, but I have never actually noticed this peculiar behaviour in other parts of the world; whereas here, on the banks of the Fly, it is a regular and common practice.

At night, it is a different story. Large numbers of both species congregate together to roost in a favoured tree. They usually choose a dead tree with many branches, especially one that has become detached from the river bank, and is actually standing in the water. It is a fine sight at night, with our spot-lights, to view such a tree, sometimes with as many as 200 birds roosting in it. They all take off as the ship passes, but soon return to settle again.

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A SEA-BIRDING CRUISE TO TRISTAN DA CUNHA
20 January to 2 February, 1993.

by Beau W. Rowlands

Introduction. This was my fourth visit to Tristan da Cunha, and the first cruise from Cape Town to the group on the (new) RMS *St Helena*. A special call has been made there annually, from 1985, to enable the Governor of St. Helena to visit the island and, prior to 1993, was on a diversion between St. Helena and Cape Town on the regular southbound voyage from the UK. Now a separate cruise slotted between southbound and northbound voyages, the trip is expected to remain annual, though in 1993 an extra cruise took place in April. My principal objective this time was a climb to the Base, (or plateau), to secure some video footage and slides of the island's two species of nesting albatross.

Both my first two visits, on the South African research and supply vessel *RSA* - 22-29 Jun'74, hosted ashore by Dr M.E. Richardson (see Richardson 1984), and 23-27 Jun'75, with Peter Repetto as host - took place in winter, when locally breeding albatrosses were away at sea. My third visit - 7-9 Feb'89, aboard the (old) RMS *St Helena* (Rowlands 1991) - was in the breeding season, but I was not able to get a climb organised in the few hours I had ashore. The nearest I had been to the Base was on 24 Jun'74, when Dr Richardson and I, with island guide Andrew Glass, hiked around to Anchorstock Point on the west side. This took us via Burntwood, a large reddish scar of scree lying south of the Potato Patches. We found nests of the Great-winged Petrel or "Black Haglet" *Pterodroma macroptera* (egg) and Grey Petrel or "Pediunker" *Procellaria cinerea* (chick), on steep slopes just below the Base, and for years I regretted not making the extra effort to climb that little bit further.

The 1993 voyage was also an opportunity to correlate birds at sea with meteorological and other navigational data. Using the 10-minute card system, one-hour observations were taken daily at 0800, 1200 and 1700, local time, and copies of the respective sheets are lodged with the RNBWS.

Passage Cape Town to Tristan. We sailed at 1600 on 20 Jan, our Captain, David Roberts, taking us along the coast to Hout Bay and Kommetjie within 2nm, before setting course for the open sea shortly before 1800. Against the backdrop of the magnificent cloud-decked Cape Peninsula mountains, the cold Benguela waters (12.8°C at Cape Town (33.9°S 18.4°E), 17.1°C at 2nm out, off Slangkop Point) gave us a superb diversity of seabirds. We saw Jackass Penguins *Spheniscus demersus*, White-chinned Petrels *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*, Cape Gannet *Morus capensis*, Cape Cormorant *Phalacrocorax capensis*, Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*, Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*, Hartlaub's Gull *L. hartlaubii*, Swift (or Crested) Tern *Sterna bergii*, Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis* and Common/Arctic Terns *S. hirundo/paradisaea*. The largest single counts were for Cory's Shearwater (16), Cape Cormorant (35) and Common/Arctic Tern (41). All were extremely active on and above the surface, indicating large fish shoals. The wind was SSW/1-2, air temp. up to 19.8°C, sea slight. Cape Fur Seals were also present.

At 0800/21st, 190nm out, (sea 20.1°C, 5m SW swell) we had our last Kelp Gull, and first Great-winged Petrel and a White-chin, astern. For the next two days the weather was partly cloudy, and the sea remained moderate. We added

to our list with first sightings of Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*, Black-browed Albatross *D. melanophris*, Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus*, (on 21st), Yellow-nosed Albatross *D. chlororhynchos*, and Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*, (on 22nd). On 23rd, the 0800 hour count gave us our first Southern Skua *Catharacta antarctica*, and a Wanderer, Yellow-nose and Great Shearwater. Our noon posn. was 35°.8°S 00.7°W, 962nm out, (air temp 16.2°C, sea 19.3°C), and in the hour we saw only a couple of Great Shearwaters, though we passed a large accumulation of kelp just before 1300. However, in the 1700 hour we had our first Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*, Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis* and White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria*, with a Wanderer and Great Shearwater.

The 24th was partly cloudy, with a moderate/slight sea and a confused swell. At 0800 we had our first of only two birdless hours. The noon position was 36.7°S 07.8°W, 1,312nm out, 216nm to Tristan, (wind N/3, air 19.8°C, sea 18.0°C). In the hour we only had one Yellow-nose and two Great Shearwater sightings. At 1700, we had up to two Wanderers, a Yellow-nose and two Great Shearwaters, with a Wanderer astern at 1800.

Tristan da Cunha. We dropped anchor off the Tristan settlement of Edinburgh soon after 0600 on 25th, and spent a fine day in the settlement. In the late afternoon, the central peak (2,060m) was free of cloud, but from the ship it was largely hidden by the Base plateau. Around the anchorage, numbers of resident Yellow-nosed and Sooty Albatrosses and Antarctic Terns *S. vittata*, were in frequent attendance for scraps, especially when the crew line-fished from the stern. I lunched with Peter and Pat Repetto who put me in touch with Andrew Glass. Although now 67 and retired, Andrew was still a regular guide. Familiar with the nesting-sites of both species of albatross, he suggested we went again via Burntwood, from where the climb to the Base was shorter than straight up from the settlement.

On deck the following morning, 26th, were two Kerguelen Petrels *Lugensa brevostris*. Dazzled by the ship's lights, they had flown aboard overnight at the anchorage. (See also photos *Sea Swallow* 42:1. and Editor's note, below) The darker plumage of one suggested it had just fledged. Its feet were black. The older bird, grey in plumage, had pinkish feet. Neither could take off from the deck but flew off strongly when released over the side.

Eight other passengers, including Capetonians Eivind Thesen and Alfons G. Hacker, joined us on the climb. We were driven out to Burntwood in the Administrator's land-rover by Joe Green, another islander. The weather was cloudy to overcast and cold, with rain setting in from the west as we proceeded up along the northern side of the scree, via a gulch. Above lay an extensive grass-covered slope, sheep-grazed in places, beyond which was the final section leading to the plateau, far steeper, but decked in tree-ferns and other vegetation providing adequate footholds. An old rope afforded further assistance. The climb took two hours and by the time we reached the plateau, at 1140, the cloud-cover had dropped to below this level, enveloping us in thick mist, as Andrew led us to a spot well away from the edge and surrounded by thick ferns, island trees and other vegetation. We enjoyed our pack-lunches here, partly sheltered from the wind.

Immature Kerguelen Petrel *Lugensa brevirostris*, showing fresh dark plumage, aboard RMS *St Helena* at anchorage off Tristan da Cunha, 26 Jan'93. Photo: B.W. Rowlands

We were all wet through. The weather continued to deteriorate and, as the Sooty Albatrosses were nesting further inland, up gulches, we had to give them a miss, but Andrew led us to a nest of the Yellow-nosed Albatross. On the edge of the Base rim were two adults, and I quickly shot off a few pictures in the mist and rain; one opened its lengthy wings but settled down again. To our delight, the birds allowed an easy approach for standard-lens pictures, and even in the mist some raindrops could be seen on the back of the nearer bird. The nest, a few metres inland, was a cylindrical structure of mud, grass and moss about 10" (25cm) high and a foot (30cm) across, set in undergrowth within stands of low island trees, tree ferns and soft grasses of a deep green.

Ensconced was a large downy chick, which clapped its bill at us in warning. We kept our distance, though, as too close an approach could have triggered a spray with its last meal! But I secured some excellent pictures and video before the continuing drop in temperature and rising winds, not to mention chill through wet clothing, forced us to start back down almost immediately. It was 1230. Back at the rim there was only one adult. However, just as I started some final video footage the second bird returned, landing right into my field of vision and I captured a beautiful greeting sequence by the two birds.

Our descent took only some 65 minutes. It was a long way down before we emerged from the cloud-layer. As we reached the open grass, which covered about a third of the total height of 520m, the wet springy surface was dangerously slippery and we had to toboggan this sector "in bottom gear". I found myself safely guided down for most of the way by a sheep-grazed furrow, like a child on a slide.

After negotiating the scree, we arrived at the bottom by Burntwood's rocky shore-line where we came across an unexpected bonus - four Rockhopper

Penguins *Eudyptes chrysocome*. They were my first seen ashore at the island. Two were moulting, but the others were already in bright new dress. Around them were numerous discarded feathers. One bird honked loudly at us as we passed.

On our walk back we were met at the Hillpiece by the land-rover, urgently sent out for us as the seas had begun to build up; we had not heard the ship's recall siren. On the little harbour-wharf, an oil-stained Rockhopper peered at us from under a boat. Getting aboard ship was dicy as the barge frequently collided with the gangway in the rising swell and we had to be helped across.

A climb to the Base can be both difficult and highly dangerous. Although it was good to see it managed this time by passengers over 20 years my senior, it is certainly not for the faint-hearted. The deteriorating conditions kept us all aboard the following day (27th). At times the island was enshrouded and the only birds we saw were Antarctic Terns.

Conditions the next morning (28th), though improving, were still too rough to embark the Governor and Administrator, and we took a run over to **Inaccessible Island**. Departing at 0830, we first steamed south along Tristan's eastern side, enjoying breathtaking views, including most of the area above the Base, though the summit itself was covered by cloud. On the same run in Feb'89, this side was almost entirely obscured by mist. **Nightingale Island**, circled on my 1989 visit, was omitted this time, due to a Force 8 gale with rough seas which hit us south of Tristan, but at Inaccessible's Carlisle Bay (1155-1225, noon 37.3°S 12.6°W) we found a lee patch where we steamed slowly through massive rafts of Great Shearwaters, putting up thousands of birds. One raft numbered some 10,000. Here we also saw a single Common Noddy *Anous stolidus*. It was partly cloudy, the wind WSW/6, air 16.2°C, sea 16.3°C, and the sun emerged to highlight a number of lofty waterfalls cascading down Inaccessible's sheer cliffs. Our return to Tristan took us past Anchorstock Point and the Potato Patches. Throughout the run, I made continuous 10-minute counts. The most regular counts were of Yellow-nosed Albatross (up to six) and Great Shearwater (up to eight away from Inaccessible). Less frequent (singles only) were Sooty Albatross and White-chinned Petrel (including one of the Spectacled race *P.a. conspicillata*). A Southern Skua circled as we returned to the anchorage. Antarctic Terns (counts up to six) were seen only along the north side of Tristan, at the anchorage and eastward.

We managed to embark the Governor and Administrator by 1445 and sailed for Cape Town soon after 1530. The 1700 hour (wind NNE/4, air 14.2°C, sea 15.8°C, moderate) produced Wandering and Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, White-chins and Great Shearwaters, the latter with counts up to 5. Despite squalls, Tristan remained in view until just after 1800.

Return passage to Cape Town, 29 Jan - 2 Feb. This is invariably smoother than the outward trip, as one is moving with the weather. There was normally plenty to see, but nothing unusual. Species included Wandering and Yellow-nosed Albatross, Soft-plumaged, and White-chinned and Great-winged Petrel, White-bellied Storm-petrel, and Great Shearwater. A Spectacled Petrel was flushed from the water by the vessel at 34.9°S 8.5°E, at 1700 on 31st.

Conclusion. We docked in Cape Town at 0700 on 2nd, at the end of a most delightful cruise. It is certainly an empty ocean for shipping; on the outward run we passed only five vessels, two on the return. For adventurous seabirders, however, the passage between Cape Town and Tristan da Cunha is well worth the

experience, not to mention the islands themselves. Although at times there were few birds, with two birdless hour-counts, in four voyages (two in summer, two in winter) I never had a full day without a feathered escort. In winter, the trip is likely to be far rougher, but bird numbers are enhanced by species moving up from more southerly breeding grounds. With the annual RMS *St. Helena* visits now from Cape Town, the experience has become more regularly available to seabirders, especially in the summer. I certainly hope for another opportunity, sometime.

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Note by Editor. My apologies for the unfortunate error to the caption of frontispiece photos in *Sea Swallow* 42:1. This should have read "Aboard RMS *St Helena* anchored off Edinburgh Settlement, Tristan da Cunha" (not St Helena).

Inaccessible Island to become a Nature Reserve.

I am grateful to learn from Dr Peter Ryan, of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, Cape Town, of the splendid news that The Island Council of Tristan da Cunha has recently agreed that Inaccessible Island should be declared a Nature Reserve. It is globally important for its many endemic terrestrial species, and as a breeding site for seabirds. Literally millions of seabirds, of at least 16 species, breed there, including the northernmost population of Wandering Albatross, and the Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria a. conspicillata* breeds only there. The world's smallest flightless bird, the Inaccessible Island Rail *Atlantisia rogersi*, also is entirely restricted to the island, and there are three other endemic landbirds shared with other islands in the Tristan group. The islands have been called a miniature Galapagos because of the radiation among the the endemic *Nesospiza* finches. Inaccessible Island is also home to a large number of endemic plants and invertebrates, notably weevils and snails.

Inaccessible Island is uninhabited, and has no introduced mammals, and only a handful of introduced plants and invertebrates. It thus has one of the most intact oceanic island ecosystems; the greatest threat to this is the introduction of alien animals and plants. Tristan islanders will retain the right to collect driftwood and guano from the island, but other access will be restricted, and all living resources will be protected. This very significant step goes a long way towards ensuring that it remains one of the least disturbed temperate oceanic islands in the world. Taken together with Gough Island, which is already a reserve, some 44% of the land area of Tristan is now set aside for conservation - the islanders have set a splendid example for others to follow. Well done.

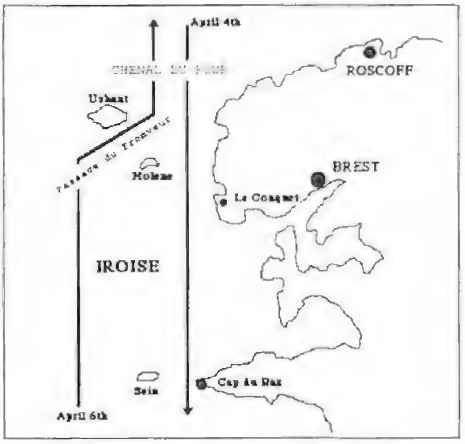
M.B.C.

SHORT NOTES

Little Gulls off the Britanny coast
Observations from MV *Bretagne* on 4th and 6th April 1993

by Stephen Hales and Derek Hallett

Within minutes of having arrived at the Britanny Coast and entering the Chenal du Four (48°41'N 4°45'W) on 4th April, a flock of gulls were disturbed by the passage of the vessel. On examination, they were found to be Little Gulls *Larus minutus* and numbered some 500 birds. They remained in the air for a short while before quickly settling again on the sea. No more Little Gulls were seen for nearly an hour, and then further flocks were again put up off the sea by the ship, as it crossed the Bay de Iroise to Cap du Raz (48.0°N 4.6°W). These flocks usually numbered in size about 200 birds. Of great interest was that these were all adults, and we have no recollection of noticing any immatures amongst them. One smaller flock of 110 was seen just south of Cap du Raz. Bad light prevented any further accurate sea watching. Our total count of Little Gulls in this area was about 3,000.



Returning from Santander on 6th, the vessel took a much wider passage at this location and remained out to sea until approaching Ushant then, keeping the island off the port bow, sailed through the Passage du Fromveur before proceeding across the English Channel. One adult Little Gull was noted at the southerly end of Ushant, and then some very small groups of about 20-30 birds were recorded through the channel. The last flock of Little Gulls, numbering 120, was seen just north of the island. Of interest here was that these generally smaller flocks contained both immmatures and adults, about 50% of each.

At both times, other species identified in the area included Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, Lesser Black-back *L. fuscus* and Great Black-back *L. marinus*. In smaller numbers were Gannet *Morus bassanus*, Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* and a few auks *Alcidae*.

Second winter Little Gulls are very difficult indeed to age in these instances, and our observations relate to clearly immature birds showing the dark wing-bars, or apparent adults. It is most likely that on both occasions many more birds were present in the area. Those seen were only disturbed, and therefore evident, by the passage of the ship. Once settled, they were soon lost again in the heavy swell running at the time.

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Cayenne Terns in Antigua
by Robin Cox

During the period 6-10 March '94 two unusual terns were seen at close quarters on both 7th and 9th, which I noted as "very similar to Sandwich Terns, but with yellow/orange bills, black legs". They were NOT Royal Terns *Sterna maxima*- there were also plenty of these, which were much bigger, and fishing further out. These two were fishing close inshore. My first thoughts were they might be Lesser-crested Terns *S. bengalensis*, but for the fact that "the books" said they did not occur there. Following subsequent correspondence with Michael Casement and Bill Bourne, I am now convinced these were Cayenne Terns *Sterna (sandvicensis) eurygnatha*. The description in Harrison (1983) fits exactly; I had overlooked the entry on page 99 of Bond (3rd edition 1974) which reports the sighting of this vagrant species in Puerto Rico. (NOTE by MBC. Page 242 of the 4th edition (1979) shows two records: "Puerto Rico Jan 26, April 8" - no year given).

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Dr. R.A.F. Cox, Linden House, Long Lane, Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire. SG8 7TG.

COMMENT by WRPB. A tern of Cayenne type, showing some black on the bill was reported by David Osborne at Bertha's Beach, East Falklands, on 28 Nov and 27 Dec'89. Subsequent enquiries were made with Rodolfo Escalente, in Uruguay, who reported that the Cayenne Tern (now usually regarded as a yellow-billed South American race *eurygnatha* of the Sandwich Tern) breeds down the east coast of South America, south to at least 44.9°S, and has been recorded south to 48°S. These birds show a variable percentage of blotched black and yellow bills, some having a yellow tip, as in the Sandwich, or being wholly black.

Comments on English names for seabirds
by Dr W.R.P. Bourne and Commander M.B. Casement, RN.

Last year we asked for comments on the list of the seabirds that we recognise, and the English names that we prefer for standard use (*Sea Swallow* 42: 16-27). Several readers have indicated general approval, but only two have responded with specific comments: Senior Radio Officer W.F. Curtis RFA, a long-term RNBWS member with vast experience at sea, and Dr J.T.R. Sharrock, in his capacity as Editor of *British Birds* (though he is also a member of the committee of the International Ornithological Congress considering English names for birds). The main points of difference raised, and the reasons for our original choices, are as follows:-

Diomedea cauta. Bill Curtis favours the use of distinctive names for those races of albatrosses which are often easily recognisable at sea, but questions the use of the name "Shy Albatross" for this species - "can't really go for the idea

of the bird being shy because it is not a ship follower - more albatrosses ignore ships than are attracted to them". COMMENT. We are in favour of recording the occurrence of recognisable races, since it provides useful information about their distribution, but it is also necessary to have a distinctive name when the race cannot be recognised. Since the name "Shy" actually derives from the Latin, meaning "cautious", we were proposing this for *D. cauta*, when no attempt is made to distinguish the race; the other names might be used for the races.

Pagodroma nivea. Bill Curtis questions the need for names for the two forms of Snow Petrel, "which are indistinguishable, except in the hand, by wing lengths". COMMENT. These birds show an enormous variation in size, possibly because they were separated into two populations during the ice-ages, which have now met again. They are sometimes treated as not merely two races, but distinct species, (though as we have reported they interbreed freely). We therefore provided names for both, while trying to indicate (by the use of light print and brackets) that we feel that the recognition of two seems unnecessary.

Puffinus carneipes. Tim Sharrock reports that when the readers of *British Birds* were asked if they preferred, (for this Australasian species, unknown in Europe) the name "Flesh-" or "Pale-footed Shearwater" they chose the second name "mainly on the grounds that the foot was pale rather than fleshy.... a surprisingly large number of correspondents vehemently opposed the racially biased name Flesh-footed Shearwater". COMMENT. The name "Flesh-footed" also derives from the Latin *carneipes* and has always been preferred by the outspoken people in the area where the bird breeds. The alternative "Pale-footed" was invented in America, where it is scarce, and has now been abandoned even there.

Hydrobates pelagicus. Tim Sharrock reports that "British Storm-petrel" seems particularly inappropriate when the bulk of the breeding population is actually in Ireland... "European Storm-petrel" is a far more appropriate name, and one to which few if anyone will object on political grounds". It is also reported in *British Birds* 87: 304 that a postal referendum in Ireland has since revealed that 82% (of 104 replies) preferred "European Storm-petrel, 10% Irish Storm-petrel and 6% "British Storm-petrel". COMMENT. As it happens, the name British Storm-petrel does not appear to be of English origin, but was devised in America when the British refused to provide a more precise name than "Storm Petrel". In consequence, this was the only name available to W.B. Alexander for his *Birds of the Ocean* in 1928. It therefore appears to have at least two-thirds of a century worldwide priority over the recent South African "European" Storm-petrel, so why change it now?

Larus ridibundus. The name "Common Black-headed Gull" adopted for this species in America seems bound to lead to confusion with Common Gull (known there as the Mew Gull), and the alternative Northern Black-headed Gull was suggested by W.B.Alexander as early as 1928, and seems greatly preferable.

Catharacta maccormicki. Bill Curtis thought that the name "South Polar (Skua)" was given to the species in a bygone era when it was thought that the birds remained very close to the Antarctic Continent. As this is far from the truth, it is certainly time to kill off this name." He also asked why the scientific

name is so spelt, when it was named after "Robert McCormick". COMMENT. Mc was originally an abbreviation for Mhic or Mac (Gaelic for "son of") and respectable scientific nomenclature does not use abbreviations.

Corrections. A few misprints crept into our list, the less obvious of which are: there should be no query after 'Gould's Petrel' (p19), there should be brackets around '*Calonectris diomedea edwardsi* Cape Verde Shearwater' (p20), and the correct scientific name for the 'Olivaceous Cormorant' is *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*'. The photograph of the Soft-plumaged Petrel (on p27) came from 52.1°S (not N).

CONCLUSION. We are encouraged by the response to this check-list, and remain open to any further comments/suggestions, but see no reason for immediate changes.

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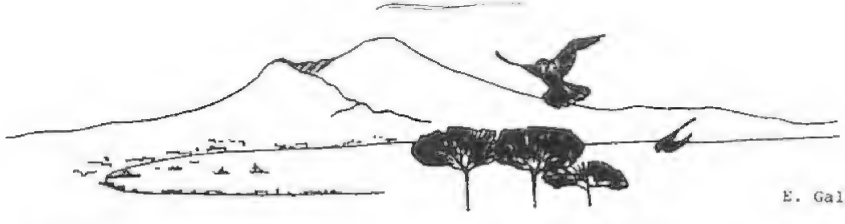
NAPLES REPORT 1994

by Mark Walters



Despite the departure of the two most active RNBWS members, David Dobson and Lizzie Gale, we have continued to gather useful information regarding the avifauna along the stretch of coastline either side of Naples. Local ornithological groups are beginning to record sightings more systematically, but there is still no equivalent of the various ornithological society bulletins to be found in the UK. Up till now, sightings of rarer species frequently went unrecorded or, as was more often the case, rare birds passed by unobserved (unless they were shot). Birds which may have been regular or irregular migrants were classified as accidentals, or not recorded at all.

It would be worth re-examining the status of at least two species, both of which are reported as "accidentals" in Scebbas's extremely thorough recent publication *Gli Uccelli Della Campania*:

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*. On a recent trip (13 Feb'94) with local ornithologist Giancarlo Moschetti to the mouth of the effluent outlet "Regi Lagni" (10 miles north of Naples) we saw ten about 100 yards offshore; the same species had also been seen off the coast of Lazio, albeit in slightly more salubrious waters, earlier that month.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*. There have been at least three reliable sightings so far this year, along the coast of Campania, which would appear to indicate that it could be promoted from accidental status (A1) to at least "irregular migrant" status.

Such sightings indicate the importance of getting out in the field, preferably with a first-class telescope, and investing time in sea-watching. It is likely to pay dividends.

On the subject of accidentals, it seems that one of the best places to be in January this year was not by an effluent outlet on the degraded coastline north of Naples, but in the RNBWS President's back garden. This is an extract from his diary written just before his departure, in February:

"Our three years in Naples have shown us that there is plenty of bird life to be seen from our large balcony, which overlooks an area of gardens and large trees, with the Bay of Naples beyond (the sketch heading this article was made from here). Were we better at identifying the many birds that fly past, or are heard, I'm sure we could amass a fair-sized list of species. But we did have one tiny success on 8 January, when we heard a distinctive bird-song, new to us, in the umbrella pines below. Minutes later, two small unfamiliar birds perched on a sprig of bare wood some 40 yards away, one a dull colour, the other a bright orange-red, with white wing-bars that were very distinctive when the birds finally flew away. They were certainly crossbills (rare visitors here), but could they be the even rarer **Two-barred Crossbills *Loxia leucoptera***, from Siberia? We next played the recordings of all the crossbill variants, and the only one which matched the song we heard was indeed the Two-barred Crossbill, a species never before recorded in the Naples area. Having made our sketches, and noted weather, wind, terrain etc. (it was a time of very fierce gales throughout Europe), I phoned Mark Walters and Giancarlo Moschetti, who immediately promised to come very early on the following Sunday, weather permitting, to see if they too could see and hear our crossbills.

That Saturday night was a particularly late one for me, so I wasn't too unhappy to see lowering clouds and heavy rain at 0500, and make the command decision to go back to bed. To my eternal shame, Mark and Giancarlo turned up for the dawn, with binoculars and a large tape-recorder, to play the calls and song of the Two-barred Crossbill. An hour and half of bird calls, and a huge breakfast later, the skies had cleared and we could clearly see the tops of the umbrella pines and cedars below. And, yes, we did see and identify a pair of "crossbills". Unfortunately, the light was not good enough to see any wing-bars, and the balance of conjecture is that they were probably **Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra***. But the two songs are so different that the report of the original sighting will go forward as a "possible" first occurrence, in the region, of a Two-barred Crossbill.

As Mark and Giancarlo left, each made a parting comment - Mark to say that he wasn't feeling too well, and Giancarlo to tell me that Peregrines breed in the Tufa cliffs, less than a mile away. That was particularly interesting to me, for I thought I had seen Peregrines two years earlier, but a visiting expert claimed they were Hobbies, and the Editor of *Sea Swallow* thought my sightings were more likely to have been Eleanora's Falcons (COMMENT by M.W. There is of course a chance that all three species could have been seen, at some stage.) Well, the point of all this is that Mark later went down with 'flu, I caught it from him, and as I lay in bed recovering, my eye was caught by the sight of a falcon gliding just a few yards away. I leapt out of bed, magically revived, grabbed my binoculars, and crept quietly out into the cold clean winter air of the balcony. There, just above me at about ten yards range, was a mature female **Peregrine *Falco peregrinus***. She remained in view for two minutes or so, giving me a chance to

check her every visual detail, and then slid off over the bay, and out of sight.

So that resolves one question, and as an instant cure for 'flu, it was terrific; I must write to the BMA. And I'll certainly re-read John Baker's Book, *The Peregrine*."

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Peregrine Falcon

sketch by E. Gale.

The first record of McCormick's (or the South Polar) Skua for Europe and the Northern Hemisphere

by Dr W.R.P. Bourne and Dr D.S. Lee

Although McCormick's Skua first appears to have been collected by the ship's surgeon of HMS *Terror*, in the Ross Sea, in the southern summer of 1840-41 (McCormick 1884), it was not described as a distinct species *Stercorarius* (or *Catharacta) maccormicki* for over half a century (Saunders 1893). Then it was initially assumed to be resident in the Antarctic, and was only detected carrying out a transequatorial migration in the North Pacific, where there are no resident large northen skuas. There it has now been found regularly moving north off Japan in the spring (Kuroda 1962), and south off North America in the autumn (Devillers 1977). More recently, it has also been noticed that there is an old specimen, and there has been a recent ringing recovery, from Greenland (Salomonsen 1976). This has led to further examination of old collections in search of specimens from the Atlantic; in view of the difficulty of obtaining detailed decriptions of birds at sea, it has seemed increasingly likely that proof of its occurrence here may depend on the discovery of unidentified specimens in old collections (Gantlett and Harrap 1992, Bourne and Curtis 1994).

For long, the only old record from the Pacific was specimen 46093 in the American Museum of Natural History, reported with several other southern seabirds "in the cabinet of Nicolas Pike" to come from "off Monterey", California (Lawrence 1851-53), and identified as C. *maccormicki* by Devillers (1977). It has been re-examined by Lee (1993), Richard Sloss and Mary LeCroy, who found that its wing measured 370+c.5mm, the exposed culmen 54-55.4mm, and tarsus 72-77.5mm, and agree that it matches the sub-antarctic forms C. *(skua) lonnbergi* or C. *(s.) hamiltoni*. While Lee (1993) has pointed out that all these birds occur at the Indo-Pacific sub-antarctic islands, Bourne has also seen the same species together at sea around the Falklands and Juan Fernandez. In view of the much larger amount of shipping then sailing around South America (Rydell 1952), it also seems possible that these specimens may have been collected at sea by someone sailing from eastern North America, around Cape Horn to join the Californian Gold Rush, and perhaps sent home on the same ship, as it came into

port, with a covering note headed "off Monterey" (Bourne 1994).

In addition to the specimen, collected off western Greenland in mid-July 1902, at Copenhagen (Salomonsen 1976), several other old specimens have now been located from the Atlantic area, including US National Museum 75209 taken off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland in July 1878 (Lee 1989) and American Museum of Natural History 744420 taken off the Faroes on 24 September 1889 (Bourne 1989). It also appears to have been overlooked that a dark skua in the J.H. Gurney jun. collection, said to have been obtained at Yarmouth, England, in October 1869, figured in a standard European textbook (Dresser 1871-81) might be McCormick's Skua (Bourne and Curtis 1994).

This skin is still in the Castle Museum, Norwich. Since McCormick's Skua had not yet been described, it was originally identified by the leading authority of the day, Howard Saunders (1876), as a dark-phase Great Skua. It was found to be a moderately dark bird, in fresh plumage, with the outer primaries still growing. Measured with a ruler, its wing was 378+mm (with about 20-30mm to grow), the exposed culmen 45mm, and the tarsus 60mm, near the means given by Devillers (1977) for C. *maccormicki*, while the distinctive length of the tarsus in particular is less than the minimum that he recorded for any other form of *Catharacta*. It still bears Gurney's original label "Great Skua, Leadenhall, Oct.'69, J. Gatcombe, 'Yarmouth', and on the other side "Fig,.*B of Eur.*, HED".

The situation at Leadenhall Market, in London, was investigated by Gurney (1870) every few days from 17 October to 10 November in the following year. Among other things, he saw eight Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus*, and was told by "a very respectable dealer" that six came from Yarmouth, one from Wisbeach, and one from Holland (it is not specified whether this was Holland in Lincolnshire, or the Netherlands). He reports "As a rule, they do not think it worthwhile importing gulls from abroad. With these birds was one specimen of the so-called common skua (then a rare bird); it was entered in the paper which had come with the game as a "Mother Bing"... I am quite certain that a large proportion of the birds in the London markets are British-killed, and the game-dealers, when they "get to know you", will give not only the exact locality, but even the names of their agents..."

Norfolk was accepted as the likely origin for this skua by not only Gurney (a local man), Dresser (1871-1881), and Saunders (1874) - three of the leading ornithologists of the day - but later Stevenson and Southwell (1890). The most probable source for the numerous seabirds on sale in the London markets at that time (including a Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* on 26 December 1889; Bourne 1992) is perhaps one of the ten light-vessels off the east coast of Britain, likely to have been serviced from Yarmouth. Their crews may have passed the time wildfowling until, with the imminent passage of the Bird Protection Act ten years later, they were persuaded by Harvie-Brown and Cordeaux (1880) to start recording bird migration, instead.

When McCormick's Skua was eventually described by Saunders (1893) over 20 years later, it was initially thought to be pale. By the time the dark phase was described by Wilson (1907) the old Norfolk specimen appears to have been forgotten. In any case, it seems unlikely that anyone would have suspected that it might occur in Europe, until northern ringing recoveries were reported elsewhere (Bourne and Curtis 1994. But note that the new Dakar recovery in July, mentioned in the legend, and the Yarmouth specimen have NOT been included

in this map). Now that Lawrence's Californian bird has been re-identified, and its origin questioned (Lee 1893), Gurney's specimen seems of particular interest because it appears to be the first McCormick's Skua for not only Britain, Europe and the North Atlantic, but the entire Northern Hemisphere.

Acknowledgements

We are indebted to Rob Driscoll and staff of the Castle Museum, Norwich, the British Museum (Natural History), and the American Museum of Natural History, for a variety of help, and Bill Harper of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, for assistance with the literature.

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STOP PRESS...and yet further recent reports - from Malaga, southern Spain

by Andrew M. Paterson.

Prompted by the publication of Bourne and Curtis (1994), two records, in the period which registers the greatest Great Skua movement in Malaga Bay (see Paterson 1987 and 1990), but both previously rejected by the Iberian rarities committee, may now merit reconsideration:-

8 July 1988, at Benalmadena harbour, Malaga.

At 1630Z, for just less than two minutes. Range: 1,500m min., using 10x50 and 20x70 binocs. Sun, from behind R shoulder, directly on to bird. Observer very familiar with Great Skua *C. skua*, frequently seen this area, including days previous and following date, though none today.

Description. The following is from notes taken at the time: (See also sketch drawn subsequently)

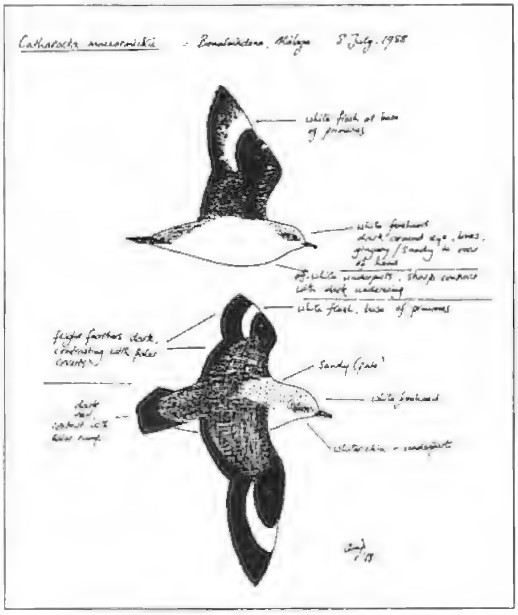
Size and flight. Size possibly slightly less than *C. skua*. Flight: as for *C. skua*. Overall appearing a 'short' *C. skua* in format. **Head and body**: Forehead white, greyish around eyes and ear coverts, gingery/sandy (pale) from ear coverts to rear of head and on to crown, but not hooded effect as far as seen. Underparts white from chin to undertail coverts, an outstanding feature, contrasting with dark of underwing, strong light may mean this was actually off-white/pale beige. **Wings**: extensive white flash, equal to that of *C. skua* on upper and underwing, otherwise dark with no outstanding features, darker primaries. **Tail**: darker than rump, nearly black. **Back, mantle & rump**: pale sandy to middle of mantle, then dark brown back and rump.

Discussion. This bird was outstanding because of its colouration on the head, neck, mantle (upper) and underparts - strikingly different from *C. skua*. From the first seconds of sighting, I was convinced that I was looking at an example of *maccormicki*, pale morph. In colouration it conforms reasonably to the illustration 197A, p.130 of Harrison (1983), although the bird observed did not show yellowish on the head, but more sandy/gingery, and neither did the extent of the dark shown match that of the right hand of the two 197A illustrations, but that of the left hand; equally, the Malaga Bay bird showed paler further down the mantle.

28 June 1990, at Benalmadena, Malaga,

At 1700-1730Z, a skua was seen intermittently for about 40 mins, minimum range ca. 1,500m, with 10x40 binoculars. Weather: sun to R behind, directly onto sea, no silhouettes, no cloud; misty beyond 6km; sea calm.

Circumstances. I was carrying out gull census work from the seawall of Benalmadena harbour, when a skua, which I initially thought was *S. pomarinus* on size and jizz when it was head on to me, flew in from the SW and settled on the sea some, 2,000m from the watch point. As it approached and turned, and I was able to look with more care, I was certain I was looking at an example of *maccormickii*. During the next 40 mins or so, I watched it on and off, during which time it associated directly with a single *C. skua* which joined it, whilst both attempted to parasitise several Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea*, approaching to ca. 1,500m before both finally settled together on the sea where they were still resting some 45 minutes later, when the watch finished.


Catharacta maccormicki - Benalmadena, Malaga 8 July 1988
white flash at base of primaries
white forehead
white underparts - sharp contrast with dark underwing
white flash, base of primaries
flight feathers dark, contrasting with paler coverts
sandy (pale)
white forehead
white underparts - indistinct

Description. Size and jizz as noted above, similar to that of *S. pomarinus* and visibly smaller than *C. skua*, when direct comparison was possible, slightly less ponderous in flight. **Flight**: similar to *pomarinus*, slightly more agile when chasing

C. *diomedea*, slightly faster wingbeat rate in level flight. **Forehead** mid-brown, darker brown on crown and cheeks, **neck** pale brown to almost a pale yellowish, extending onto upper mantle. **Underparts** mid-brownish grey from breast to vent. **Underwing** appeared to be a mid to dark uniform brown, with extremely prominent white wing-flash at the base of primaries, more so than in accompanying C. *skua*. On the **upperwing**, the white flash at the base of the primaries was less strongly marked, and the flight feathers appeared darker than the coverts and back. When the birds were together on the sea, the bird in question was a mid-brown on the upperparts, notably paler than the dark brown of C. *skua*.

Discussion. When seen alone on the sea before being joined, this bird appeared 'wrong' for a standard C. *skua*, it being too pale in back and head colouration and the flight was just too rapid. The head colouration was totally different from that of *S. pomarinus* and it showed too much white in the wing for that species. In terms of illustrations from Harrison (1983), the upperwings and back resemble most closely bird 197D on page 130, pl.54, while head colouration is a mixture of this and 197B, while the head, neck and upper mantle colouration is somewhat similar to that of photo 413, p.107 in Harrison (1987) except that the bird seen was certainly darker on crown and ear coverts.

COMMENT. Peter Harrison was consulted on the identification of the first record, and replied (*pers. comm* of 6 Jul'89) that (from the description and drawing) he had 'no doubt whatsoever that this was a South Polar Skua'. Dr R.W. Furness (*pers. comm* of 7 Dec'88) similarly agreed . Dr. W.R.P. Bourne has now seen both these records and comments 'the first particularly looks very good'.

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Observations of landbirds from MV *Bretagne* in the Bay of Biscay, 12 October 1992

by Stephen Hales and Derek Hallett

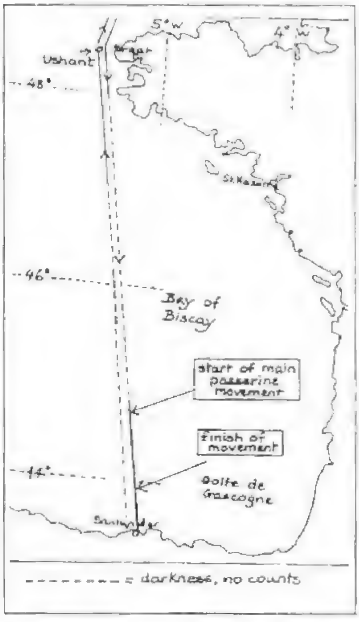
Our observations started at ship's position 40.5°N 04°W, some three hours out of Santander, heading south. Arriving on deck at first light, we noticed two Skylarks *Alauda arvensis*, and a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* hopping about. A single Gannet *Morus bassanus* was following, but little else was observed within the vicinity of the ship. It was decided to take breakfast, and return to the deck as soon as possible. On our return, we were immediately confronted by a sizeable flock of passerines flying close along the port side of the vessel; these comprised 53 Robins, and also with them were Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs*, Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*, and a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*. At this time, a male Blackcap *Silvia atricapilla* landed, and perched for a while on one of the nearby fire extinguishers. At the end of the first ten-minute recording session the Robin count was 171. The next two interval counts saw an influx of Skylarks, and this trend continued for over two hours.

For the next two and a half hours we recorded all the passerines sighted from the vessel, logging them at ten-minute intervals - see table 1.

Species	8.25				9.05			9.35			10.05			10.35			11.05				Totals
Robin	171	6	9	9	11	20	4	7	10	1	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	251
Meadow Pipit	3	2	-	1	15	1	4	1	10	11	-	2	7	-	6	1	1	-	3	68
Skylark	-	21	32	3	5	6	83	12	21	19	54	20	15	24	12	16	-	57	53	453
Pied/White Wagtail	-	-	6	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	12
Chaffinch	5	4	-	2	1	-	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	19
Song Thrush	1	3	-	1	3	-	-	-	4	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
Turtle Dove	-	1	-	-	2	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Hobby	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Starling	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Phylloscopus warbler	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Blackcap	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Grey Heron	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Red-footed Falcon	-	-	-	-	1 (1st year male perched on boat for 25 minutes)															1

Table 1. 12 October 1992. Position of ship at start of count 44.5°N 04°W, Golfe de Gascoigne.Wind NE/3, cloud 3/8 cover, sea slight, visibility good.

The birds all flew past, overtaking the ship, and were estimated clearly flying from NE to SW across the stern. The wind was NE force 3 but did not appear to affect the direction the birds were taking. The passerines were noted at roughly the same height - 40ft above sea level. The Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* flew much lower, at about 6ft, but the Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* and the Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* were flying higher at about 80ft, both heading due south - the Heron appeared to veer slightly SE, after having overhauled the ship.



The highlight was the Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* - a young male which landed on the guardrails just below us, and stayed there for some 25 minutes, giving excellent views, and enabling a full description to be made. When it did take off it flew very fast with a charging and twisting Nightjar-like flight, across the front of the bridge, and away to the SE. (COMMENT. 1992 was a remarkable year for this species in W. Europe - see Nightingale and Allsopp (1994). Ed.)

A Hobby *Falco subbuteo* also delighted us as it flew past the ship. It kept low over the water, flying direct and with powerful wingbeats. The bird offered a good, but albeit brief, comparison with the Red-footed Falcon, which was resting on the boat at the same time. There can be few instances when two different birds of prey are visible from a ship at sea.

Had we not breakfasted that morning, and stayed on deck, one wonders what would have been recorded. Possibly more Robins would have been noted, which would have tied in with the sudden high count at

0825. What was also of interest to us was that during this ornithological spectacle a large audience of other passengers aboard had built up around us and were avidly watching the proceedings, and all thirsty for knowledge on migration; many of them did not believe that the Robin in their garden, the most faithful of birds, could even consider spending the winter in Spain or the Mediterranean.

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The Long-billed Murrelet *Brachyramphus (marmoratus) perdix*

by W.R.P. Bourne

The *Brachyramphus* murrelets are a group of small coastal alcids, whose nests long eluded discovery, and few have been found even now, so that they are receiving much attention from the Pacific Seabird Group. The **Marbled Murrelet** ***B. marmoratus*** has received much publicity because it nests in the trees of the threatened mature coniferous forests behind the west coast of North America. It was designated a Threatened Species in 1992, and is being studied by a Technical Committee. According to reports by John Piatt *et al* (1994), **Kittlitz's Murrelet** ***B. brevirostris***, a smaller species which occurs in the vicinity of ice to the north, feeding off the mouths of glacially-fed rivers, and nesting on open ground in the hills, is also at risk, with a world population below 20,000 birds, 95% in Alaska.

Recent genetic studies indicate that the **Long-billed Murrelet** ***B. perdix***, which replaces the Marbled Murrelet (of which it is usually regarded as a race) on the Asiatic side of the Pacific, is even more distinct than Kittlitz's Murrelet. It is larger, with a bill averaging 20.3 mm compared to 15.5 mm in the Marbled, and 10.7 mm in Kittlitz's Murrelets, while the adults have a white eye-ring in the winter, and no cinnamon on the back in summer. The few in the British Museum (Natural History) agree with this. But, as with Kenyon's Shag *Stictocarbo kenyoni*, which presumably comes from the same area (though it is still only known from bones from the Aleutians - see Bourne (1993)), we need to know much more about it before deciding its status. It might be useful if anyone who visits the NW Pacific were to investigate these birds.

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Notes from the Philippines and Indonesia.

by Captain D. M. Simpson, MN.

Whilst on leave from my ship on the Fly River, Papua New Guinea (PNG), I made a number of birdwatching trips elsewhere.

Candaba Swamp - Philippines.

On 28 February 1992, I spent a day birding at Candaba Swamp, about 80km NE of Manila. The morning was very fine, and pleasantly cool up to about 1000, when it really started to heat up. The afternoon started cloudy, with one or two light showers. It had been dry around here recently, and there was very little water in the swamp - just a few decent sized ponds. Sightings of most interest were:

Siberian Rubythroat *Erithacus calliope*. On the top of some long grass-stems, a beautiful male, obviously ready for breeding. The red throat being much brighter and more pronounced than any shown in my field guides. The bird was calling its musical double "chirrup" note, and its red throat would continually puff out as it did so. It was right out in the open, and apparently unafraid of my presence - unusual behaviour for a known skulker, but fortunate for me, it being my first sighting of this species. I did not positively see more than this one lovely bird, but I suspect that there were others skulking in the nearby thickets. These must be ready to migrate to their breeding grounds in NE Asia. It is strange that I have never had this migratory species aboard ship in the China Sea.

Luzon Tailorbird *Orthotonus derbianus*. An endemic species, and one that I am sure I have overlooked in the past. This was not however a very good sighting, the bird being a female, or immature, and the chestnut on the crown dull, and not continuous. The tail was dull chestnut, and the wings much darker than those of the Common Tailorbird. This bird showed a white throat and greyish-white underparts, with some long tawny/buffish colouring on the flanks. Habitat was thickets and long grass.

Other warblers. The large Striated Canegrass Warbler *Megalurus palustris* is still very common and conspicuous here. There were many large warblers about - whether or not these were the Clamorous Reed-warblers *Acrocephalus stentorius* or Eastern Great Reed Warblers *A.arundaceus orientalis* I'm not sure, but probably both. I identified at least one Gray's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella fasciolata*. Both the Zitting Cisticola *Cisticila juncidis* and Bright-capped Cisticola *C. exilis* were present. Candaba Swamp is still great country for grass-warblers, and I'm sure there were other species present.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarun*. There were many of these around, looking quite beautiful in their breeding plumage. Perhaps they breed here? One flock of about 30 birds foraged some recently turned over and tractored ground - maybe 100 to 200 birds sighted in all.

Greater Paintedsnipe *Rostrulata benghalensis*. These lovely birds are surprisingly common, and it would not surprise me to find them actually breeding here. I saw at least ten, including a party of five that were sat amongst grass tussocks in such a way as to lead me to suspect they might have eggs, but I did not find any. It is strange that the female of this species is the

more brightly coloured.

Rails and Crakes. Several White-browed Crakes ***Poliolinnus cinereus*** were seen, and a pair of **Common Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus***, with two tiny but fully mobile chicks were sighted. I saw one or two other crakes, but not well enough to identify them. I was a little disappointed not to see any of the rarer rails, but this is still a good place to look for them.

I recorded 42 species of birds, but was disappointed to see no harriers or other hawks - it used to be a good place for them; similarly no wild ducks - I suspect too much hunting is to blame for this.

Snakes alive! - (and dead). A Philippine Cobra?

Two large dead cobras were hung up in a small tree, no doubt as a warning to all. During the afternoon we saw a live cobra swim across a pond. It was not so big, perhaps 5ft long, but very agile, and like most snakes, a good swimmer. I do believe that one must be very careful when walking around the swamp, as it seems to be well-endowed with numerous snakes.

Cibodas, and Gunong Gede National Park, West Java.

13-20 March 1992. At about 1600m, and adjacent to the excellent forest of Gunong Gede National Park, the Cibodas Botanical Gardens are good birding areas. Most of Java's mountain endemics may still be found here. I missed out on many of them, including the Trogon, Crocias, Cochoa, and even the endemic **Laughing Thrush *Garrulax*** sp., though I believe I heard the last-named. Maybe I just did not climb high enough into the 3,000m forest, being too overweight and unfit. It was particularly disappointing not to find any of the local fruit doves and imperial pigeons; a single **Emerald Dove *Chalcophops indica*** being my only pigeon here.

But the trip was well worthwhile, and I did find some wonderful new birds. Endemic species are indicated - (J) = endemic to Java (I) = endemic to Indonesia:

Javan Fulvetta *Alcippe pyrrhoptera* (J)
Fulvous-chested Flycatcher *Rhinomyias olivacea*
Blue-crowned Barbet *Megalaima armillaris* (I)
Javan White-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura euryura* (J)
Sunda Warbler *Seircercus grammiceps* (I)
Pygmy Tit *Psaltria exilis* (J)
Javan Fire-breasted Flowerpecker *Dicaeum sanguinolentum* (I)
Temminck's Babbler *Trichastoma pyrogenys*
Pearl-cheeked Babbler *Stachyris melanothorax* (J)
Chestnut-fronted Shrike-babbler *Pteuthius aenobarbus*
Javan Hill Partridge *Arborophila javanica* (J)
Javan Tesia *Tesia superciliaris* (J)
Lesser Forktail *Enicus velatus* (I)
Javan Hawk-eagle *Spizaetus bartelsi* (J)
Orange-spotted Bulbul *Pycnonotus bimaculatus* (J)
Brown-throated Barbet *Megalaima corvina* (J)
Red-tailed Fantail *Rhipidura phoenicurus* (J)
Javan Grey-fronted White-eye *Lophozosterops javanicus* (J)
Sunda Blue Robin *Cinclidium diana* (I)
Bar-winged Prinia *Prinia familiaris*
Indonesian serin *Serinus estherae*
Kuhl's Sunbird *Aethopygia exinia* (J)
Moluccan Kestrel *Falco moluccensis*
Javan Mountain Bulbul *Hypsipetes virescens ixos* (I)

Other interesting birds seen included **Lesser Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina fimbriata***, White-browed Shortwing *Brachypteryx montana*, Pygmy Wren *Pnoepyga pusilla*, and an old Candaba favourite - the **Striated Canegrass Warbler *Megalurus palustris***; also the **Indonesian (Brush) Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus (sepulchralis)***.

A few mammals were seen: a monkey, the Suali *Presbytis ayguta* is common

in the forest, and the Musung *Paradaxorus haemapraditas* was seen at least twice at the forest edge.

I would like to make a return visit here, and tackle the mountain, as well as find the birds I missed.

Alfred Russel Wallace, in his epic book *The Malay Archipelago*, first published in London in 1864, describes this area, and its fauna very well - see Chapter VII - Java. He was there in 1861, and he refers to Gunong Gede as "Gedeh Mountain". Thanks to the conservation efforts of the Indonesia Government, the mountain remains much as he describes it 134 years ago.

STOP PRESS. I made a return visit there in November 1993, and managed to get close to the summit on this occasion. I added the following birds to my original list, of 1992 (above):

Blue-tailed Trogon *Harpactes reinwardtii*
Spotted Crocias *Crocias albonatus*
Red-fronted Laughing Thrush *Garrulax rubifrons*
White-collared Babbler *Stachyris thoracica*
Sunda Minivet *Pericrotus miniatus*

also other species more widespread in SE Asia. Any birder visiting Java really should head for this place.

Ujong Kulon Reserve, West Java, 26-27 March 1993.

This reserve lies at the western tip of Java, and includes two offshore islands Pulau Penaitan and Pulau Peucang. We had only one full day and two nights here, and we stayed at the Base Camp Hotel on Peucang; we did not visit Penaitan. This was therefore no more than an introductory visit.

There is a beautiful *Dipterocarp* forest on Peucang, and on the nearby mainland we walked through a wonderful forest of large fig trees. The **Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus*** was seen on the forest floor of both places, and amongst the figs I also found the endemic **Black-banded Barbet *Megalaima javensis***.

This place would be well worthy of a much longer visit. Macaque Monkeys and wild pigs are much in evidence, but one would need much more time to find the rhinoceros, tigers and panthers etc, which still exist here.

I observed **Wreathed Hornbills *Rhyticeros undulatus*** and **Southern Pied Hornbills *Anthracoceros convexus*** here, also **Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*** (now rare in Java), and **Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea***.

The entire National Park is some 420 square kms, and the Indonesians are to be congratulated for maintaining such a park as this on the very much overpopulated island of Java. Let us hope they keep it going.

On 26 March, while skirting the park's outer perimeter by road, I observed plenty of **Green Jungle Fowl *Gallus varius***.

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Special Review: The impact of the Gulf War
by W.R.P. Bourne

Heneman, B. 1991. *The Gulf War Oil Spills: The ICBP Survey of the Saudi Arabian Gulf Coast. March 1991.* A report to the International Council for Bird Preservation and the National Commission on Wildlife Conservation and Development, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Obtainable from Burr Heneman, 35 Horseshoe Hill Rd., Bolinas, CA, USA 9424. Pp. 21 with 12 appendices.

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Brooks D.J. and Evans, M. (eds) 1993. Arabian Gulf Issue. *Sandgrouse* 15: 1-105.

Price, A.E.G. and Robinson, J.H. (eds) 1993. The 1991 Gulf War: Coastal and Marine Environmental Consequences. *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 27: i-viii + 1-380.

The 1990-91 Gulf War was remarkable as the first occasion when one side deliberately set out to damage the local environment, and the other side then deliberately exaggerated the consequences, as forms of psychological warfare. It has therefore now become difficult to assess the damage. RNBWS observations at sea are summarised in *Sea Swallow* 40: 4-12. The other main sources of information (which incidentally ignore this report) are all investigations sponsored by the Saudi Arabian National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD), covering the situation along their east coast, which received the main impact of the oil and smoke. These include the excellent initial summary of the observations, reprinting most relevant previous literature, by Burr Heneman, and symposia of observations of birds edited by Brooks and Evans and general implications (with a summary of the previous bird observations on p.157-161) edited by Price and Robinson.

To summarise a great deal of information: in the first place, it must be said that the Gulf is not quite such an unique habitat as has been made out, since it dried out with the fall of sea-level during the ice-ages, so that its natural community must have come from elsewhere during the last 10,000 years. The more ancient marshes now being drained in Iraq appear to have a much more remarkable wildlife. Secondly, it must also be realised that this is not in fact the first major oilspill in the Upper Gulf, since there was an extremely similar, but possibly even more extensive spill, when the Iraqis previously attacked the Iranian Nowruz oilfield at the same season in 1983. This was already reduced to a line of asphalt along the tideline, and it is interesting to see Heneman's comparison of the reported mortality:-

Table 1: Animals reported killed in the two similar Gulf oilspills.

	Nowruz, Spring 1983	Kuwait, Spring 1991
Dugongs	37	0
Cetaceans	33	0
Turtles	56	4
Sea-snakes	1,500+	2
Birds	200+	20,000+

It is not clear if the differences are due to the first spill extending further south, or fuller investigation of birds with the second (or both). The discrepancies between the totals probably provide a fair indication how reliable they are. The final estimate of bird mortality due to oil in 1991 was twice as high; the commonest species were Great-crested and Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* and *P. nigricollis*, Great and Socotra Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* and *P. nigrogularis*, and Dunlin *Calidra alpina*. Symens reports about 65% of the cormorants brought to the Wildlife Rescue centre at Jubayl were saved, but only 5-10% of the grebes. Habard and Wolstencroft report that the shorebirds which winter in the area were already leaving when the oil was released, but that the following winter their numbers had fallen from 250,000 to under 100,000; the first total presumably represents a substantial recovery from the similar spill eight years before, while it is uncertain how many of the birds which subsequently disappeared simply moved elsewhere, since this is only a small fraction of the suitable habitat around the northern Indian Ocean. There seems to have been no definite detectable permanent damage to the natural community.

It is also difficult to assess the effect of the barrier of smoke (hundreds of kms long and several km high), which lay for many months across the paths of the birds and insects migrating between Asia and Africa. Symens found that 10% of the landbird migrants caught on the coast at Tanajeeb, (150 km south of the Kuwait border), and 5% of those caught at Jubayl (another 100 km further south), were sooty. John Ash (*Bull. Brit. Orn.* Cl. 112: 53-55) also saw several dark House Martins *Delichon urbica* over 7,500 km to the NE at Anadyr (64°35'N 177°20'E) (on the far side of Siberia) on 13-15 Jun'91, and Symens a variety of oiled water-birds inland at Riyadh again the following autumn, when he also found that 8% of the Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* caught there were oiled, and had lost a fifth of their normal weight - probably enough to make it difficult for them to complete their migration.

Dr W.R.P.B Bourne, Department of Zoology, Aberdeen University, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen AB9 2TN, Scotland.

REVIEWS

Dutch Seabird Atlas

Baptist, H.J.M. and Wolf, P.A. 1993.*Atlas van de vogels van het Nederlands Continentaal Plat*. Pp. 168, ISBN 90-369-0433-1. Rapport DGW-93-93.013, Rijkwaterstaat, Dienst Getijdwateren, postbus 8039, 4330 EA Middelburg, The

Netherlands. (Dutch with English summary).

This consists of annotated two-monthly maps of seabirds seen during aerial surveys of Dutch territorial waters since December 1984. It is calculated that there are a quarter of a million birds in the spring, rising to three quarters of a million in the winter, and that "some areas have an importance for seabirds comparable to international importance as used for wetlands.... the most important areas are the Oestergronden (in August-September) and the Bruine Bank (in winter)... for the Alcidae. The coastal zone is important for seabirds all the year....". It seems time other people adopted a similar classification for different sea areas (and behaved accordingly).

W.R.P.B.

A Neglected British Ornithologist

Ralph, R. 1993. *William MacGillivray*. Pp. ix + 94, xxxii colour plates. ISBN 0-11-310043-4. The Natural History Museum, HMSO, London, £25.

A short but thorough biography of someone who has been described as the "best but most unjustly neglected British ornithologist of the first half of the last century", the friend and mentor of Audubon, designed to accompany some of his attractive unpublished paintings and drawings.

W.R.P.B.

All the Bird Songs of Britain and Europe. By Jean C. Roché.
Wildsounds, Holt, 1993. ISBN 1-898665-77-X. Cassettes vols.1-4: £29.95 for full set. Compact discs vols. 1-4: £12.99 per vol.

Life used to be so simple for birdwatchers. In the old days, one got by with a pair of binoculars, a reference book and a notebook and pencil. When I first started there was no Field Guide covering European birds, but now one is spoilt for choice, and also binoculars and high-powered telescopes. The latest addition to the birdwatcher's armoury is a set of recordings of bird-songs, and one could do no better with the latest to appear on the market. This covers 420 species, both seabirds and landbirds. The former include the weird and haunting cries of divers, Manx and Cory's Shearwaters and British and Leach's Storm-petrels; for anyone who has never heard these in the wild, a listen to these tapes is an education. And of course for someone trying to learn the songs and calls of the many confusing warblers, one could find no better. But they will not help the identification of all those "little brown jobs" which turn up on board ships; they do NOT sing in such a hostile environment! The seaborne birdwatcher has to use his eyes only, which is why such identifications are so difficult.

But for anyone travelling ashore in Europe, and wanting to make best use of the opportunity to identify birds, these tapes (or CDs) are well worth the cost.

M.B.C.

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U.S.A.: Dr R.G. Wolk, Ph.D., North Carolina Museum of Natural History, P.O. Box 27647 Raleigh, North Carolina 27611.

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*; authors do not need to be RNBWS members. Material may take the form of papers, notes, progress reports, letters or reviews.

The style used in *Sea Swallow* should be followed, with the standard abbreviations, nomenclature and use of references.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing, together with figures and diagrams. Those with facilities to do so are encouraged to send on 3.5"diskette, **in ASCII format**, together with a print-out.

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition, must reach the Editor by **31st May**.

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